SOME PASSAGES OF THE Life and Death Of the Right Honourable JOHN Earl of *ROCHESTER*,

Who died the 26th of *July*, 1680.

Written by his own Direction on his Death-Bed,

By *GILBERT BURNET*, D. D.

Now Lord Bishop of *SARUM*.

The Fifth Edition.

LONDON,

Printed for **Richard Chiswell**, at the *Rose and Crown* in St. *Paul's* Church-yard. 1700.

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THE PREFACE.

THE Celebrating the Praiſes of the Dead, is an Argument ſo worn out by long and frequent uſe; and now become ſo nauſeous, by the Flattery that uſually attends it, that it is no wonder if Funeral Orations, or Panegyricks, are more conſider'd for the Elegancy of Style, and fineneſs of Wit, than for the Authority they carry with them as to the truth of matters of Fact. And yet I am not hereby deterred from medling with this kind of Argument, nor from

handling it with all the plainneſs I can; delivering only what I my ſelf heard and ſaw, without any borrowed Ornament. I do eaſily foreſee how many will be engaged for the ſupport of their Impious Maxims and Immoral Practices, to diſparage what I am to write. Others will cenſure it, becauſe it comes from one of my Profeſſion; too many ſuppoſing us to be induced to frame ſuch Diſcourſes for carrying on what they are pleaſed to call Our Trade. *Some will think I dreſs it up too artificially, and others, that I preſent it too plain and naked,*

But being reſolv'd to govern my ſelf by the exact Rules of Truth, I ſhall be leſs concerned in the Cenſures I may fall under. It may ſeem liable to great Exception,

ception, that I ſhould diſcloſe ſo many Things, that were diſcovered to me, if not under the Seal of Confeſſion, yet under the Confidence of Friendſhip: But this Noble Lord himſelf not only releaſed me from all Obligation of this kind, when I waited on him in his laſt Sickneſs, a few Days before he died; but gave it me in Charge not to ſpare him in any thing which I thought might be of uſe to the Living; and was not ill pleaſed to be laid open, as well in the worſt, as in the beſt and laſt Part of his Life, being ſo ſincere in his Repentance, that he was not unwilling to take Shame to himſelf, by ſuffering his Faults to be expoſed for the Benefit of others.

I write with one great disadvantage, that I cannot reach his chief Design, without mentioning some of his Faults: But I have touched them as tenderly as the Occasion would bear: And I am sure with much more softness than he desired, or would have consented unto, had I told him how I intended to manage this Part. I have related nothing with personal Reflections on any others, concerned with him, wishing rather that they themselves reflecting on the sense he had of his former Disorders, may be thereby led to forsake their own; than that they should be any ways reproach'd by what I write: and therefore though he used very few Reserves with me, as to his Course of Life, yet since others had a Share in most Parts of it, I shall relate

relate nothing but what more immediately concerned himſelf: and ſhall ſay no more of his Faults, than is neceſſary to illuſtrate his Repentance.

The Occaſion that led me into ſo particular a Knowledge of him, was an Intimation given me by a Gentleman of his acquaintance, of his deſire to ſee me. This was ſome time in October, 1679. *when he was ſlowly recovering out of a great Diſeaſe. He had underſtood that I often attended on one well known to him, that died the Summer before; He was alſo then entertaining himſelf in that low ſtate of his Health, with the Firſt Part of the* Hiſtory of the Reformation, *then newly come out, with which he ſeemed not ill pleaſed: and we had accidentally met in*

two

two or three Places ſometime before. Theſe were the Motives that led him to call for my Company. After I had waited on him once or twice, he grew into that freedom with me, as to open to me all his Thoughts, both of Religion and Morality: and to give me a full View of his paſt Life: and ſeemed not uneaſie at my frequent Viſits. So till he went from London, *which was in the beginning of* April, *I waited on him often. As ſoon as I heard how ill he was, and how much he was touched with the Senſe of his former Life, I writ to him, and received from him an Anſwer, that, without my Knowledge, was printed ſince his Death, from a Copy which one of his Servants conveyed to the* Preſs. *In it there is ſo undeſerved a Value*

put

put on me, that it had been very indecent for me to have publiſh'd it: Yet that muſt be attributed to his Civility and way of Breeding: And indeed he was particularly known to ſo few of the Clergy, that the good Opinion he had of me, is to be imputed only to his unacquaintance with others.

My End of writing is ſo to diſcharge the laſt Commands this Lord left on me, as that it may be effectual to awaken thoſe who run on to all the Exceſſes of Riot; and that in the midſt of thoſe Heats, which their Luſts and Paſſions raiſe in them, they may be a little wrought on by ſo great an Inſtance, of one who had run round the whole Circle of Luxury; *and as* Solomon

lomon *says of himself*, Whatsoever his Eyes desired, he kept it not from them; and withheld his Heart from no Joy. *But when he looked back on all that on which he had wasted his Time and Strength, he esteemed it* Vanity and Vexation of Spirit: *Though he had both as much natural Wit, and as much acquired by Learning, and both as much improved with Thinking and Study, as perhaps any Libertine of the Age: Yet when he reflected on all his former Courses, even before his Mind was illuminated with better Thoughts, he counted them Madness and Folly. But when the Powers of Religion came to operate on him, then he added a Detestation to the Contempt*

he

he formerly had of them, ſuitable to what became a ſincere Penitent, and expreſſed himſelf in ſo clear and ſo calm a manner, ſo ſenſible of his Failings towards his Maker and his Redeemer, that as it wrought not a little on thoſe that were about him; ſo, I hope, the making it Publick may have a more general Influence, chiefly on thoſe on whom his former Converſation might have had ill Effects.

I have endeavoured to give his Character as fully as I could take it: for I who ſaw him only in one Light, in a ſedate and quiet Temper, when he was under a great decay of Strength and loſs of Spirits, cannot give his Picture with that life and

advantage

advantage that others may, who knew him when his Parts were more bright and lively: Yet the Compoſure he was then in, may perhaps be ſuppoſed to balance any abatement of his uſual Vigour which the declination of his Health brought him under. I have written this Diſcourſe with as much Care, and have conſidered it as narrowly as I could. I am ſure I have ſaid nothing but Truth; I have done it ſlowly, and often uſed my ſecond Thoughts in it, not being ſo much concerned in the Cenſures might fall on my ſelf, as cautious that nothing ſhould paſs, that might obſtruct my only deſign of writing, which is the doing what I can towards the reforming a looſe and lewd Age. And if ſuch a Signal

Inſtance

Inſtance concurring with all the Evidence that we have for our moſt holy Faith, has no Effect on thoſe who are running the ſame Courſe, it is much to be feared they are given up to a reprobate ſenſe.

SOME

SOME

SOME

PASSAGES

OF THE

Life and Death

OF

JOHN

Earl of *Rocheſter.*

John Wilmot Earl of *Rocheſter* was born in *April*, *Anno Dom.* 1648. His Father was *Henry* Earl of *Rocheſter*, but beſt known by the Title of the Lord

Wilmot, who bore so great a Part in all the late Wars, that mention is often made of him in the History: And had the chief Share in the Honour of the Preservation of his Majesty that now Reigns, after *Worcester*-Fight, and the Conveying Him from Place to Place, till he happily escaped into *France*: But dying before the King's Return, he left his Son little other Inheritance, but the Honour and Title derived to him, with the Pretensions such eminent Services gave him to the King's Favour: These were carefully managed by the great Prudence and Discretion of his Mother, a Daughter of that Noble and Ancient Family of the *St. Johns* of *Wiltshire*, so that his Education was carried

carried on in all things ſutably to his Quality.

When he was at School, he was an extraordinary Proficient at his Book: and thoſe ſhining Parts which have ſince appeared with ſo much luſtre, began then to ſhew themſelves: He acquired the *Latin* to ſuch perfection, that to his dying-day he retained a great reliſh of the Fineneſs and Beauty of that Tongue, and was exactly verſed in the incomparable Authors that writ about *Auguſtus*'s time, whom he read often with that peculiar delight which the greateſt Wits have ever found in thoſe Studies.

When he went to the *Univerſity*, the general Joy which over-ran the whole Nation upon his Majeſties Reſtauration,

but was not regulated with that Sobriety and Temperance, that became a serious gratitude to God for so great a Blessing, produced some of its ill Effects on him: He began to love these disorders too much: His Tutor was that Eminent and Pious Divine Dr. *Blanford*, afterwards promoted to the Sees of *Oxford* and *Worcester*: And under his Inspection, he was committed to the more immediate Care of Mr. *Phineas Berry*, a Fellow of *Wadham* College, a very learned and good natur'd Man; whom he afterwards ever used with much respect, and rewarded him as became a great Man. But the Humour of that Time wrought so much on him, that he broke off the Course of his Studies; to which no Means could

could ever effectually recall him; till when he was in *Italy* his Governour Dr. *Balfour*, a learned and worthy Man, now a Celebrated Phyſician in *Scotland*, his Native Country; drew him to read ſuch Books, as were moſt likely to bring him back to love Learning and Study: and he often acknowledged to me, in particular three days before his Death, how much he was obliged to love and honour this his Governour, to whom he thought he owed more than to all the World, next after his Parents, for his great Fidelity and Care of him, while he was under his Truſt. But no part of it affected him more ſenſibly, than that he engaged him by many Tricks (ſo he expreſſed it) to delight in

Books and Reading; So that ever after he took occaſion in the Intervals of thoſe woful Extravagancies, that conſumed moſt of his time, to read much: And though the time was generally but indifferently employed, for the choice of the Subjects of his Studies was not always good, yet the habitual Love of Knowledge, together with theſe Fits of Study, had much awaken'd his Underſtanding, and prepared him for better things, when his Mind ſhould be ſo far changed as to relliſh them.

He came from his Travels in the 18th Year of his Age, and appear'd at Court with as great Advantages as moſt ever had. He was a graceful and well-ſhaped Perſon, tall, and well-made,

made, if not a little too ſlender: He was exactly well bred, and what by a modeſt Behaviour natural to him, what by a Civility become almoſt as natural, his Converſation was eaſie and obliging. He had a ſtrange Vivacity of Thought, and Vigour of Expreſſion: His Wit had a Subtilty and Sublimity both, that were ſcarce imitable. His Style was clear and ſtrong: When he uſed Figures they were very lively, and yet far enough out of the common Road: He had made himſelf Maſter of the Ancient and Modern Wit, and of the Modern *French* and *Italian*, as well as the *Engliſh*. He loved to talk and write of Speculative Matters, and did it with ſo fine a Thread, that even thoſe who hated the Subjects

that his Fancy ran upon, yet could not be charmed with his way of treating of them. *Boileau* among the *French*, and *Cowley* among the *English* Wits, were those he admired most. Sometimes other mens thoughts mixed with his Compositures; but that flowed rather from the Impressions they made on him when he read them, by which they came to return upon him as his own thoughts; than that he servilely copied from any. For few men ever had a bolder flight of Fancy, more steddily governed by Judgment than he had. No wonder a young man so made, and so improved, was very acceptable in a Court.

Soon after his coming thither he laid hold on the first occasion that offered to shew his readi-

ness

neſs to hazard his Life in the Defence and Service of his Country. In *Winter* 1665. he went with the Earl of *Sandwich* to Sea, when he was ſent to lie for the *Dutch Eaſt-India Fleet*; and was in the *Revenge*, Commanded by Sir *Thomas Tiddiman*, when the Attack was made on the Port of *Bergen* in *Norway*, the *Dutch* Ships having got into that *Port*. It was as deſperate an Attempt as ever was made: During the whole Action, the Earl of *Rocheſter* ſhewed as brave and as reſolute a Courage as was poſſible: A Perſon of Honour told me he heard the Lord *Clifford*, who was in the ſame Ship, often magnifie his Courage at that time very highly. Nor did the Rigours of the Seaſon, the hard-

hardneſs of the Voyage, and the extream danger he had been in, deter him from running the like on the very next Occaſion: For the *Summer* following he went to Sea again, without communicating his Deſign to his neareſt Relations. He went aboard the Ship Commanded by Sir *Edward Spragge*, the Day before the great Sea-fight of that Year: Almoſt all the Volunteers that were in the ſame Ship were killed. Mr. *Middleton* (Brother to Sir *Hugh Middleton*) was ſhot in his Arms. During the Action, Sir *Edward Spragge* not being ſatisfied with the Behaviour of one of the Captains, could not eaſily find a Perſon that would chearfully venture through ſo much Danger, to carry his Commands to that Captain.

Captain. This Lord offered himſelf to the Service; and went in a little Boat, through all the Shot, and delivered his Meſſage, and returned back to Sir *Edward:* which was much commended by all that ſaw it. He thought it neceſſary to begin his Life with theſe Demonſtrations of his Courage in an Element and way of Fighting, which is acknowledged to be the greateſt Trial of clear and undaunted Valour.

He had ſo entirely laid down the Intemperance that was growing on him before his Travels, that at his Return he hated nothing more. But falling into Company that loved theſe Exceſſes, he was, though not without difficulty, and by many Steps, brought back to it again.

again. And the natural heat of his Fancy, being inflamed by Wine, made him so extravagantly pleasant, that many to be more diverted by that humor studied to engage him deeper and deeper in Intemperance; which at length did so entirely subdue him; that, as he told me, for five years together he was continually drunk; not all the while under the visible effect of it, but his Blood was so inflamed, that he was not in all that time cool enough to be perfectly Master of himself. This led him to say and do many wild and unaccountable things: By this, he said, he had broke the firm Constitution of his Health, that seemed so strong, that nothing was too hard for it; and he had suffered so

ſo much in his Reputation, that he almoſt deſpaired to recover it. There were two Principles in his natural Temper, that being heighten'd by that heat, carried him to great exceſſes: a violent love of Pleaſure, and a diſpoſition to extravagant Mirth. The one involved him in great Senſuality; the other led him to many odd Adventures and Frollicks, in which he was oft in hazard of his Life. The one being the ſame irregular Appetite in his Mind, that the other was in his Body, which made him think nothing diverting that was not extravagant. And though in cold Blood he was a generous and good natured Man, yet he would go far in his Heats, after any thing that might turn to a Jeſt, or Matter of

of Diversion: He said to me He never improved his Interest at Court, to do a premeditated Mischief to other Persons. Yet he laid out his Wit very freely in *Libels* and *Satyrs*, in which he had a peculiar Talent of mixing his Wit with his Malice and fitting both with such apt Words, that Men were tempted to be pleased with them: from thence his Compositures came to be easily known, for few had such a way of tempering these together, as he had: So that when any thing extraordinary that way came out, as a Child is fathered sometimes by its Resemblance, so was it laid at his Door as its Parent and Author.

These Exercises in the court of his Life were not always equally

equally pleaſant to him; he had often ſad Intervals, and ſevere Reflections on them: and though then he had not theſe awakened in him from any deep Principle of Religion, yet the Horrour that Nature raiſed in him, eſpecially in ſome Sickneſſes, made him too eaſie to receive ſome ill Principles, which others endeavoured to poſſeſs him with; ſo that he was too ſoon brought to ſet himſelf to ſecure, and fortifie his Mind againſt that, by diſpoſſeſſing it all he could of the belief or apprehenſions of Religion. The Licentiouſneſs of his Temper, with the Briskneſs of his Wit, diſpoſed him to love the Converſation of thoſe who divided their Time between lewd Actions and irregular Mirth.

Mirth. And so he came t
bend his Wit, and direct hi
Studies and Endeavours to sup
port and strengthen these i
Principles both in himself an
others.

An accident fell out after this
which confirmed him more i
these Courses: When he wen
to Sea in the Year 1665, ther
happened to be in the sam
Ship with him Mr. *Mountagu*
and another Gentleman o
Quality, these two, the forme
especially, seemed perswade
that they should never retur
into *England*. Mr. *Mountagu*
said, He was sure of it: th
other was not so positive. Th
Earl of *Rochester*, and the la
of these, entred into a forma
Engagement, not without Ce
remonies of Religion, that
eithe

either of them died, he ſhould appear and give the other notice of the future State, if there was any. But Mr. *Montague* would not enter into the Bond. When the Day came that they thought to have taken the *Dutch*-Fleet in the Port of *Bergen*, Mr. *Montague* though he had ſuch a ſtrong Preſage in his Mind of his approaching death, yet he generouſly ſtaid all the while in the place of greateſt danger: The other Gentleman ſignalized his Courage in a moſt undaunted manner, till near the end of the Action; when he fell on a ſudden into ſuch a trembling that he could ſcarce ſtand: and Mr. *Montague* going to him to hold him up, as they were in each others Arms, a Can-

non Ball killed him outright, and carried away Mr. *Mountague*'s Belly, ſo that he died within an hour after. The Earl of *Rocheſter* told me that theſe Preſages they had in their minds made ſome impreſſion on him, that there were ſeparated Beings: and that the Soul either by a natural ſagacity, or ſome ſecret Notice communicated to it, had a ſort of Divination: But that Gentlemans never appearing was a great ſnare to him, during the reſt of his life. Though when he told me this he could not but acknowledge, it was an unreaſonable thing for him, to think, that Beings in another State were not under ſuch Laws and Limits, that they could not command their own motions, but

but as the Supream Power ſhould order them: and that one who had ſo corrupted the Natural Principles of Truth, as he had, had no reaſon to expect that ſuch an extraordinary thing ſhould be done for his Conviction.

He told me of another odd Preſage that one had of his approaching Death in the Lady *Warre*, his Mother in Laws houſe: The Chaplain had dream't that ſuch a Day he ſhould die, but being by all the Family put out of the belief of it, he had almoſt forgot it: till the Evening before at Supper, there being thirteen at Table; according to a fond conceit that one of theſe muſt ſoon die, One of the young Ladies pointed to him, that he was to

die. He remembring his Dream fell into some disorder, and the Lady *Warre* reproving him for his Superstition, he said, He was confident he was to die before Morning, but he being in perfect health, it was not much minded. It was *Saturday*-Night, and he was to Preach next day. He went to his Chamber and sate up late, as appeared by the burning of his Candle, and he had been preparing his Notes for his Sermon, but was found dead in his Bed the next Morning: These things he said made him inclined to believe, the Soul was a substance distinct from matter: and this often returned into his thoughts. But that which perfected his perswasion about it, was, that in the Sickness which

which brought him ſo near death before I firſt knew him, when his Spirits were ſo low and ſpent, that he could not move nor ſtir, and he did not think to live an hour; He ſaid His Reaſon and Judgment were ſo clear and ſtrong, that from thence he was fully perſwaded that Death was not the ſpending or diſſolution of the Soul; but only the ſeparation of it from matter. He had in that Sickneſs great Remorſes for his paſt Life, but he afterwards told me, they were rather general and dark Horrors, than any Convictions of ſinning againſt God. He was ſorry he had lived ſo as to waſt his ſtrength ſo ſoon, or that he had brought ſuch an ill name upon himſelf, and had an Agony in

his Mind about it, which he knew not well how to expreſs: But at ſuch times, though he complied with his Friends in ſuffering Divines to be ſent for, he ſaid, He had no great mind to it: and that it was but a piece of his breeding, to deſire them to pray by him, in which he joyned little himſelf.

As to the Supream Being, he had always ſome Impreſſion of one: and profeſſed often to me, That he had never known an entire *Atheiſt*, who fully believed there was no God. Yet when he explained his Notion of this Being, it amounted to no more than a vaſt Power, that had none of the Attributes of Goodneſs or Juſtice, we aſcribe to the Deity; Theſe were his thoughts about Religion

gion, as himſelf told me. For Morality, he freely own'd to me, that though he talked of it, as a fine thing, yet this was only becauſe he thought it a decent way of ſpeaking; and that as they went always in Cloaths, though in their Frollicks they would have choſen ſometimes to have gone naked, if they had not feared the people: So though ſome of them found it neceſſary for humane life to talk of Morality, yet he confeſſed they cared not for it, further than the reputation of it was neceſſary for their credit, and affairs: of which he gave me many Inſtances, as their profeſſing and ſwearing Friendſhip, where they hated mortally; their Oaths and Imprecations in their Addreſſes to Wo-

men which they intended never to make good; the pleasure they took in defaming innocent Persons, and spreading false Reports of some, perhaps in Revenge, because they could not engage them to comply with their ill designs: The delight they had in making people quarrel; their unjust usage of their Creditors, and putting them off by any deceitful promise they could invent, that might deliver them from present Importunity. So that in detestation of these Courses he would often break forth into such hard Expressions concerning himself as would be indecnt for another to repeat.

Such had been his Principles and Practices in a Course of many Years, which had almost quite

quite extinguiſh't the natural Propenſities in him to Juſtice and Vertue: He would often go into the Country, and be for ſome months wholly imployed in Study, or the Sallies of his Wit: Which he came to direct chiefly to *Satyre*. And this he often defended to me; by ſaying there were ſome people that could not be kept in Order, or admoniſhed but in this way. I replyed, That it might be granted that a grave way of *Satyre* was ſometimes no improfitable way of Reproof. Yet they who uſed it only out of ſpite, and mixed Lyes with Truth, ſparing nothing that might adorn their *Poems*, or gratifie their Revenge, could not excuſe that way of Reproach, by which the

the Innocent often suffer: since the most malicious things, if wittily expressed, might stick to and blemish the best men in the World, and the Malice of a Libel could hardly consist with the Charity of an Admonition. To this he answered, A man could not write with life, unless he were heated by Revenge: for to make a *Satyre* without Resentments, upon the cold Notions of *Philosophy*, was as if a man would in cold blood, cut mens throats who had never offended him: And he said, The Lyes in these Libels came often in as Ornaments that could not be spared without spoiling the Beauty of the *Poem*.

For his other Studies, they were divided between the Comical

nical and witty Writings of he Ancients and Moderns, the *Roman* Authors, and Books of Phyſick: which the ill ſtate of health he was fallen into, made more neceſſary to himſelf: and which qualifi'd him for an odd Adventure, which I ſhall but juſt mention. Being under an unlucky Accident, which obliged him to keep out of the way; He diſguiſed himſelf, ſo that his neareſt Friends could not have known him, and ſet up in *Tower-ſtreet* for an *Italian Mountebank*, where he practiſed Phyſick for ſome Weeks not without ſucceſs. In his latter years he read Books of Hiſtory more. He took pleaſure to diſguiſe himſelf, as a *Porter*, or as a *Beggar*; ſometimes to follow

ſome

some mean Amours, which, for the variety of them, he affected. At other times, meerly for diversion, he would go about in odd shapes, in which he acted his part so naturally that even those who were on the secret and saw him in these shapes could perceive nothing by which he might be discovered.

I have now made the Description of his former Life, and Principles, as fully as I thought necessary, to answer my End in Writing: And yet with those reserves that I hope I have given no just cause of offence to any. I have said nothing but what I had from his own mouth, and have avoided the mentioning of the more particular Passages of his life,

ife, of which he told me not a
ew: But ſince others were
oncerned in them, whoſe
good only I deſign, I will ſay
othing that may either pro-
oke or blemiſh them. It is
heir Reformation, and not
heir Diſgrace, I deſire: This
ender conſideration of others
as made me ſuppreſs many
emarkable and uſeful things
e told me: But finding that
hough I ſhould name none,
et I muſt at leaſt relate ſuch
Circumſtances, as would give
oo great Occaſion for the
Reader to conjecture concern-
ng the Perſons intended right
r wrong, either of which
vere inconvenient enough, I
ave choſen to paſs them quite
ver. But I hope thoſe that
now how much they were
engaged

engaged with him in his
Courses, will be somewh
touched with this tenderness
express towards them: and
thereby the rather induced
reflect on their Ways and
consider without prejudice
passion what sence this Nob
Lord had of their case, when
came at last seriously to refle
upon his own.

I now turn to those parts
this *Narrative*, wherein I m
self bore some share, and whic
I am to deliver upon the ob
servations I made, after a lon
and free Conversation wit
him for some months. I wa
not long in his Company, whe
he told me, he should trea
me with more freedom tha
he had ever used to Men of m
Profession. He would con

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ceal none of his Principles from me, but lay his thoughts open without any Diſguiſe; nor would he do it to maintain Debate, or ſhew his Wit, but plainly tell me what ſtuck with him; and proteſted to me, That he was not ſo engaged to his old Maxims, as to reſolve not to change, but that if he could be convinc'd, he would chooſe rather to be of another mind: He ſaid, He would impartially weigh what I ſhould lay before him, and tell me freely when it did convince, and when it it did not. He expreſſed this diſpoſition of mind to me in a manner ſo frank, that I could not but believe him, and be much taken with his way of Diſcourſe: So we entred into almoſt all the parts of Natural

and

and Revealed Religion, and o
Morality. He seemed pleased
and in a great measure satisfied
with what I said upon many o
these Heads: And though ou
freest conversation was when
we were alone, yet upon seve-
ral Occasions, other Persons
were Witnesses to it. I under-
stood from many hands that my
Company was not distasteful
to him, and that the Subjects
about which we talked most
were not unacceptable: and he
expressed himself often, nor ill
pleased with many things I said
to him, and particularly when I
visited him in his last Sickness;
so that I hope it may not be al-
together unprofitable to pub-
lish the substance of those mat-
ters about which We argued so
freely, with our reasoning upon
them:

them: And perhaps what had ſome effects on him, may be not altogether ineffectual upon others. I followed him with ſuch Arguments as I ſaw were moſt likely to prevail with him: and my not urging other Reaſons proceeded not from any diſtruſt I had of their force, but from the neceſſity of uſing thoſe that were moſt proper for him. He was then in a low ſtate of health, and ſeemed to be ſlowly recovering of a great Diſeaſe: He was in the Milk-Diet, and apt to fall into Hectical-Fits; any accident weakened him; ſo that he thought he could not live long; And when he went from *London*, he ſaid he believed he ſhould never come to Town more. Yet during his being in Town

he was ſo well, that he went often abroad, and had great Vivacity of Spirit. So that he was under no ſuch decay, as either darkened or weakened his Underſtanding; nor was he any way troubled with the Spleen, or Vapours, or under the power of Melancholly. What he was then, compared to what he had been formerly, I could not ſo well judge, who had ſeen him but twice before. Others have told me they perceived no difference in his parts. This I mention more particularly, that it may not be thought that Melancholly, or the want of Spirits, made him more inclined to receive any Impreſſions: for indeed I never diſcovered any ſuch thing in him.

Having

Having thus opened the way to the Heads of our diſcourſe, I ſhall next mention them. The *Three* chief things We talked about, were *Morality*, *Natural Religion* and *Revealed Religion*, *Chriſtianity* in particular. For *Morality*, he confeſſed, he ſaw the neceſſity of it, both for the Government of the World, and for the preſervation of Health, Life and Friendſhip: and was very much aſhamed of his former Practices, rather becauſe he had made himſelf a Beaſt, and had brought pain and ſickneſs on his Body, and had ſuffered much in his Reputation, than from any deep ſenſe of a Supream Being, or another State: But ſo far this went with him, that he reſolved firmly to change the Courſe of

his Life; which he thought he ſhould effect by the ſtudy of *Philoſophy*, and had not a few no leſs ſolid than pleaſant Notions concerning the folly and madneſs of Vice: but he confeſſed he had no remorſe for his paſt Actions, as Offences againſt God, but only as Injuries to himſelf and to Mankind.

Upon this Subject I ſhewed him the Defects of *Philoſophy*, for reforming the World: that it was a matter of Speculation, which but few either had the leiſure, or the capacity to enquire into. But the Principle that muſt reform Mankind, muſt be obvious to every Mans Underſtanding. That *Philoſophy* in matters of Morality, beyond the great lines of our Duty, had no very certain fixed Rule,

Rule, but in the leſſer-Offices and Inſtances of our Duty went much by the Fancies of Men and Cuſtoms of Nations; and conſequently could not have Authority enough to bear down the Propenſities of Nature, Appetite or Paſſion: For which I inſtanced in theſe two Points; The *One* was, About that *Maxim* of the *Stoicks*, to extirpate all ſort of Paſſion and concern for any thing. That, take it by one hand, ſeemed deſireable, becauſe if it could be accompliſhed, it would make all the accidents of Life eaſie; but I think it cannot becauſe Nature after all our ſtriving againſt it, will ſtill return to it ſelf: Yet on the other hand it diſſolved the Bonds of Nature and Friendſhip, and ſlackened In-

duſtry which will move but dully, without an inward heat; And if it delivered a man from many Troubles, it deprived him of the chief Pleaſures of Life, which riſe from Friendſhip. The *other* was concerning the reſtraint of Pleaſure, how far that was to go. Upon this he told me the two *Maxims* of his *Morality* then were, that he ſhould do nothing to the hurt of any other, or that might prejudice his own health: And he thought that all Pleaſure, when it did not interfere with theſe, was to be indulged as the gratification of our natural Appetites. It ſeemed unreaſonable to imagine theſe were put into a man only to be reſtrained, or curbed to ſuch a narrowneſs: This he applied to the

free

free uſe of Wine and Women.

To this I anſwered, That if Appetites being Natural, was an Argument for the indulging them, then the revengeful might as well alledge it for Murder, and the Covetous for Stealing; whoſe Appetites are no leſs keen on thoſe Objects; and yet it is acknowledg'd that theſe Appetites ought to be curb'd. If the difference is urged from the Injury that another Perſon receives, the Injury is as great, if a Mans Wife is defiled, or his Daughter corrupted: and it is impoſſible for a man to let his Appetites looſe to Vagrant Luſts, and not to tranſgreſs in theſe particulars: So there was no curing the Diſorders that muſt riſe from

thence, but by regulating these Appetites: And why should we not as well think that God intended our bruitish and sensual Appetites should be governed by our Reason, as that the fierceness of Beasts should be managed and tamed, by the Wisdom, and for the use of Man? So that it is no real absurdity to grant that Appetites were put into Men, on purpose to exercise their Reason in the Restraint and Government of them, which to be able to do, ministers a higher and more lasting pleasure to a Man, than to give them their full scope and range. And if other Rules of *Philosophy* be observed, such as the avoiding those Objects that stir Passion; Nothing raises higher Passions than ungovern'd

vern'd Luſt, nothing darkens the Underſtanding, and depreſſes a mans mind more, nor is any thing managed with more frequent Returns of other Immoralities, ſuch as Oaths and Imprecations which are only intended to compaſs what is deſired: The expence that is neceſſary to maintain theſe Irregularities makes a man falſe in his other dealings. All this he freely confeſſed was true: Upon which I urged, that if it was reaſonable for a man to regulate his Appetite in things which he knew were hurtful to him; was it not as reaſonable for God to preſcribe a Regulating of thoſe Appetites, whoſe unreſtrained Courſe did produce ſuch miſchievous effects? That it could not be denied, but

but doing to others what we would have others do unto us was a just Rule: Those men then that knew how extream sensible they themselves would be of the dishonour of their Families in the case of their Wives or Daughters, must needs condemn themselves, for doing that which they could not bear from another: And if the peace of Mankind, and the entire satisfaction of our whole life, ought to be one of the chief Measures of our Actions, then let all the World judge, whether a man that confines his Appetite, and lives contented at home, is not much happier, than those that let their Desires run after forbidden Objects. The thing being granted to be better in it self, than the Question falls

falls between the reſtraint of Appetite in ſome Inſtances, and the freedom of a mans thoughts, the ſoundneſs of his Health, his application to Affairs, with the eaſineſs of his whole life. Whether the one is not to be done before the other? As to the difficulty of ſuch a reſtraint, though it is not eaſie to be done, when a man allows himſelf many liberties, in which it is not poſſible to ſtop; Yet thoſe who avoid the Occaſions that may kindle theſe impure Flames, and keep themſelves well employed, find the Victory and Dominion over them no ſuch impoſſible, or hard matter, as may ſeem at firſt view. So that though the *Philoſophy* and *Morality* of this Point were plain, yet there is not

not ſtrength enough in tha
Principle to ſubdue Nature, an
Appetite. Upon this I urged, tha
Morality could not be a ſtron
thing, unleſs a man were deter
mined by a Law within himſelf
for if he only meaſured himſel
by decency, or the Laws of th
Land, this would teach him
only to uſe ſuch caution in hi
ill Practices, that they ſhoul
not break out too viſibly: bu
would never carry him to a
inward and univerſal probity.
That Vertue was of ſo compli-
cated a Nature, that unleſs a
man came entirely within it
diſcipline, he could not adher
ſtedfaſtly to any one Precept:
for Vices are often made ne-
ceſſary ſupports to one another.
That this cannot be done, ei-
ther ſteddily or with any ſatiſ-
faction,

faction, unleſs the Mind does inwardly comply with, and delight in the Dictates of Vertue. And that could not be effected, except a mans Nature were internally regenerated, and changed by a higher Principle: Till that came about, corrupt Nature would be ſtrong, and *Philoſophy* but feeble: eſpecially when it ſtrugled with ſuch Appetites or Paſſions as were much kindled, or deeply rooted in the Conſtitution of ones Body. This, he ſaid, founded to him like *Enthuſiaſme*, or *Canting*: He had no notion of it, and ſo could not underſtand it: He comprehended the Dictates of *Reaſon* and *Philoſophy*, in which as the Mind became much converſant, there would ſoon follow as he believed, a greater eaſineſs

easiness in obeying its Precepts. I told him on the other hand that all his Speculations of *Philosophy* would not serve him in any stead to the reforming of his Nature and Life, till he applied himself to God for inward assistances. It was certain, that the Impressions made in his Reason governed him, as they were lively presented to him: but these are so apt to slip out of our Memory, and we so apt to turn our thoughts from them, and at some times the contrary Impressions are so strong, that let a man set up a reasoning in his Mind against them, he finds that celebrated saying of the Poet.

Video

Video meliora proboq; deteriora ſequor.

I ſee what is better and approve it: but follow what is worſe.

to be all that *Philoſophy* will amount to. Whereas thoſe who upon ſuch Occaſions apply themſelves to God, by earneſt Prayer, feel a diſengagement from ſuch Impreſſions, and themſelves endued with a power to reſiſt them; ſo that thoſe bonds which formerly held them fall off.

This he ſaid muſt be the effect of a heat in Nature: it was only the ſtrong diverſion of the thoughts, that gave the ſeeming Victory, and he did not doubt but if one could turn

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to a *Problem* in *Euclid*, or t
Write a Copy of Verses, i
would have the same effect. T
this I answered, that if such
Methods did only divert th
thoughts, there might be some
force in what he said: but i
they not only drove out such
Inclinations, but begat Impres-
sions contrary to them, and
brought men into a new dispo-
sition and habit of mind; then
he must confess there was
somewhat more than a diver-
sion, in these changes, which
were brought on our Minds
by true Devotion. I added
that Reason and Experience
were the things that determi-
ned our perswasions: that Ex-
perience without Reason may
be thought the delusion of our
Fancy, so Reason without Ex-

perience

perience had not ſo convincing an Operation: But theſe two meeting together, muſt needs give a man all the ſatisfaction he can deſire. He could not ſay, It was unreaſonable to believe that the Supream Being might make ſome thoughts ſtir in our Minds with more or leſs force, as it pleaſed: Eſpecially the force of theſe motions, being, for moſt part, according to the Impreſſion that was made on our Brains: Which that Power that directed the whole frame of Nature, could make grow deeper as it pleaſed: It was alſo reaſonable to ſuppoſe God a Being of ſuch goodneſs that he would give his aſſiſtance to ſuch as deſired it: For though he might upon ſome greater Occaſions in an

extraordinary manner turn ſome peoples minds; Yet ſince he had endued Man with a faculty of Reaſon, it is fit that Men ſhould employ that, as far as they could; and beg his aſſiſtance: which certainly they can do. All this ſeemed reaſonable, and at leaſt probable: Now good men who felt upon their frequent Applications to God in Prayer, a freedom from thoſe ill Impreſſions, that formerly ſubdued them, an inward love to Vertue and true Goodneſs, an eaſineſs and delight in all the parts of Holineſs, which was fed and cheriſhed in them by a ſeriouſneſs in Prayer, and did languiſh as that went off, had as real a perception of an inward ſtrength in their Minds, that did riſe and fall with true Devotion,

Devotion, as they perceived the ſtrength of their Bodies increaſed or abated, according as they had or wanted good nouriſhment.

After many Diſcourſes upon this Subject, he ſtill continued to think all was the effect of Fancy: He ſaid, That he underſtood nothing of it, but acknowledged that he thought they were very happy whoſe Fancies were under the power of ſuch Impreſſions; ſince they had ſomewhat on which their thoughts reſted and centred: But when I ſaw him in his laſt Sickneſs, He then told me, He had another ſenſe of what we had talked concerning prayer and inward aſſiſtances.

This Subject led us to diſcourſe of God, and of the

Notion of Religion in general. He believed there was a Supream Being: He could not think the World was made by chance, and the regular Courſe of Nature ſeemed to demonſtrate the Eternal Power of its Author. This, he ſaid, he could never ſhake off; but when he came to explain his Notion of the Deity, he ſaid, He looked on it as a vaſt Power that wrought every thing by the neceſſity of its Nature: And thought that God had none of thoſe Affections of Love or Hatred, which breed perturbation in us, and by conſequence he could not ſee that there was to be either reward or puniſhment. He thought our Conceptions of God were ſo low, that we had better not think

think much of him: And to love God ſeemed to him a preſumptuous thing, and the heat of fanciful men. Therefore he believed there ſhould be no other Religious Worſhip, but a general Celebration of that Being, in ſome ſhort Hymn: All the other parts of Worſhip he eſteemed the Inventions of Prieſts, to make the World believe they had a Secret of Incenſing and Appeaſing God as they pleaſed. In a word, he was neither perſwaded that there was a ſpecial Providence about Humane Affairs; Nor that Prayers were of much uſe, ſince that was to look on God as a weak Being, that would be overcome with Importunities. And for the State after death, though he thought the Soul

did not dissolve at death; Yet he doubted much of Rewards or Punishments: The one he thought too high for us to attain, by our slight Services; and the other was too extream to be inflicted for Sin. This was the substance of his Speculations about God and Religion.

I told him his Notion of God was so low, that the Supream Being seemed to be nothing but Nature. For if that being had no freedom, nor choice of its own Actions, nor operated by Wisdom or Goodness, all those Reasons which lead him to acknowledge a God, were contrary to this Conceit; for if the Order of the Universe perswaded him to think there was a God, He must at the same time

time conceive him to be both Wiſe and Good, as well as Powerful, ſince theſe all appear'd equally in the Creation: though his Wiſdom and Goodneſs had ways of exerting themſelves, that were far beyond our Notions or Meaſures. If God was Wiſe and Good, he would naturally love, and be pleaſed with thoſe that reſembled him in theſe Perfections, and diſlike thoſe that were oppoſite to him. Every Rational Being naturally loves it ſelf, and is delighted in others like it ſelf, and is averſe from what is not ſo. Truth is a Rational Natures acting in conformity to it ſelf in all things, and Goodneſs is an Inclination to promote the happineſs of other Beings: So Truth and

Goodness were the essential perfections of every reasonable Being, and certainly most eminently in the Deity: Nor does his Mercy or Love raise Passion or Perturbation in Him; for we feel that to be a weakness in our selves, which indeed only flows from our want of power, or skill to do what we wish or desire: It is also reasonable to believe God would assist the Endeavours of the Good, with some helps suitable to their Nature. And that it could not be imagined, that those who imitated him, should not be specially favoured by him: and therefore since this did not appear in this State, it was most reasonable to think it should be in another, where the Rewards shall

ſhall be an admiſſion to a more perfect State of Conformity to God, with the felicity that follows it, and the Puniſhments ſhould be a total excluſion from him, with all the horrour and darkneſs that muſt follow that. Theſe ſeemed to be the natural Reſults of ſuch ſeveral Courſes of life, as well as the Effects of Divine Juſtice, Rewarding or Puniſhing. For ſince he believed the Soul had a diſtinct ſubſiſtance, ſeparated from the Body; Upon its diſſolution there was no reaſon to think it paſſed into a State of utter Oblivion, of what it had been in formerly: But that as the reflections on the good or evil it had done, muſt raiſe joy or horrour in it; So thoſe good or ill Diſpoſitions accompanying

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ing the departed Souls, they must either rise up to a higher Perfection, or sink to a more depraved, and miserable State. In this life variety of Affairs and Objects do much cool and divert our Minds; and are on the one hand often great temptations to the good, and give the bad some ease in their trouble; but in a State wherein the Soul shall be separated from sensible things, and employed in a more quick and sublime way of Operation, this must very much exalt the Joys and Improvements of the Good, and as much heighten the horrour and rage of the Wicked. So that it seemed a vain thing to pretend to believe a Supream Being, that is Wise and Good as well as great, and not to think

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above our limited activity; W
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the Great Creator.

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It is true we cannot have ſuitable Notions of the Divine Eſſence; as indeed we have no juſt *Idea* of any Eſſence whatſoever: Since we commonly conſider all things, either by their outward Figure, or by their Effects: And from thence make Inferences what their Nature muſt be: So though we cannot frame any perfect Image in our Minds of the Divinity, yet we may from the Diſcoveries God has made of Himſelf, form ſuch Conceptions of Him, as may poſſeſs our Minds with great Reverence for Him, and beget in us ſuch a Love of thoſe Perfections as to engage us to imitate them. For when we ſay we love God; the meaning is, we love that Being that is Holy,

Holy, Just, Good, Wise; and infinitely perfect: And loving these Attributes in that Object will certainly carry us to desire them in our selves. For whatever We love in another, We naturally, according to the degree of our love, endeavour to resemble it. In sum, the Loving and Worshipping God, though they are just and reasonable returns and expressions of the sense We have of his Goodness to us; yet they are exacted of us not only as a Tribute to God, but as a mean to beget in us a Conformity to his Nature, which is the chief end of pure and undefiled Religion.

If some Men, have at several times, found out Inventions to corrupt this, and cheat the World;

World: It is nothing but what occurs in every ſort of Employment, to which Men betake themſelves: *Mountebanks* corrupt Phyſick; *Petty-Foggers* have entangled the matters of Property, and all Profeſſions have been vitiated by the Knaveries of a number of their Calling.

With all theſe Diſcourſes he was not equally ſatisfied: He ſeemed convinced that the Impreſſions of God being much in Mens minds, would be a powerful means to reform the World; and did not ſeem determined againſt Providence: But for the next ſtate, he thought it more likely that the Soul began anew, and that her ſenſe of what ſhe had done in this Body, lying in the figures

that are made in the Brain, as ſoon as ſhe diſlodged, all theſe periſhed, and that the Soul went into ſome other State to begin a new Courſe. But I ſaid on this Head, That this was at beſt a conjecture, raiſed in him by his fancy; for he could give no reaſon to prove it true: Nor was all the remembrance our Souls had of paſt things ſeated in ſome material figures lodged in the Brain: Though it could not be denied but a great deal of it lay in the Brain. That we have many abſtracted Notions and *Idea's* of immaterial things which depend not on bodily Figures: Some Sins, ſuch as Falſhood, and ill Nature were ſeated in the Mind, as Luſt and Appetite were in the Body; and as the whole Body

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was the Receptacle of the Soul, and the Eyes and Ears were the Organs of Seeing and Hearing, ſo was the Brain the Seat of Memory: Yet the power and faculty of Memory, as well as of Seeing and Hearing, lay in the Mind; and ſo it was no unconceiveable thing that either the Soul by its own ſtrength, or by the means of ſome ſubtiler Organs, which might be fitted for it in another ſtate, ſhould ſtill remember as well as think. But indeed we know ſo little of the Nature of our Souls, that it is a vain thing for us to raiſe an *Hypotheſis* out of the conjectures we have about it, or to reject one, becauſe of ſome difficulties that occur to us; ſince it is as hard to underſtand how we remember things now;

as how we shall do it in another state: only we are sure we do it now, and so we shall be then, when we do it.

When I pressed him with the secret Joys that a good Man felt, particularly as he drew near Death, and the Horrours of ill Men especially at that time; he was willing to ascribe it to the Impressions they had from their Education: But he often confessed, that whether the Business of Religion was true or not, he thought those who had the perswasions of it, and lived so that they had quiet in their Consciences, and believed God governed the World, and acquiesced in his Providence, and had the hope of an endless Blessedness in another state, the happiest Men

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in the World: And ſaid, He would give all that he was Maſter of, to be under thoſe Perſwaſions, and to have the Supports and Joys that muſt needs flow from them. I told him the main Root of all Corruptions in Mens Principles was their ill life; which, as it darkened their Minds, and diſabled them from diſcerning better things; ſo it made it neceſſary for them to ſeek out ſuch Opinions as might give them eaſe from thoſe Clamours, that would otherwiſe have been raiſed within them: He did not deny but that after the doing of ſome things he felt great and ſevere Challenges within himſelf: But he ſaid, He felt not theſe after ſome others which I would perhaps call far greater

Sins, than those that affected him more sensibly: This I said, might flow from the Disorders he had cast himself into, which had corrupted his judgment, and vitiated his taste of things; and by his long continuance in, and frequent repeating of some Immoralities, he had made them so familiar to him, that they were become as it were natural: And then it was no wonder if he had not so exact a sense of what was Good or Evil; as a severish Man cannot judge of Tastes.

He did acknowledge the whole Systeme of Religion, if believed, was a greater foundation of quiet than any other thing whatsoever; for all the quiet he had in his Mind, was, that he could not think so good

a Being

a Being as the Deity would make him miſerable. I asked if when by the ill courſe of his life he had brought ſo many Diſeaſes on his Body, he could blame God for it; or expect that he ſhould deliver him from them by a Miracle. He confeſſed there was no reaſon for that. I then urged, that if Sin ſhould caſt the Mind by a natural Effect, into endleſs Horrours and Agonies, which being ſeated in a Being not ſubject to Death, muſt laſt for ever, unleſs ſome Miraculous Power interpoſed, could he accuſe God for that which was the effect of his own choice and ill life.

He ſaid, They were happy that believed; for it was not in every Man's power.

And upon this we diſcourſed

long about *Revealed Religion*. He said, He did not understand that business of Inspiration; he believed the Pen-men of the Scriptures had heats and honesty, and so writ; but could not comprehend how God should reveal his Secrets to mankind. Why was not Man made a Creature more disposed for Religion, and better Illuminated? He could not apprehend how there should be any corruption in the Nature of Man, or a Lapse derived from *Adam*. God's communicating his Mind to one Man, was the putting it in his power to cheat the World: For Propheſies and Miracles, the World had been always full of strange Stories; for the boldness and cunning of Contrivers meeting with the Simplicity

Simplicity and Credulity of the People, things were eaſily received; and being once received, paſſed down without contradiction. The Incoherences of Stile in the Scriptures, the odd Tranſitions, the ſeeming Contradictions, chiefly about the Order of time, the Cruelties enjoyned the *Iſraelites* in deſtroying the *Canaanites*, Circumciſion, and many other Rites of the *Jewiſh* Worſhip; ſeemed to him inſutable to the Divine Nature: And the firſt three Chapters of *Geneſis*, he thought could not be true, unleſs they were Parables. This was the ſubſtance of what he Excepted to *Revealed Religion* in general, and to the *Old Teſtament* in particular.

I an-

I answer'd to all this, that believing a thing upon the testimony of another, in other matters where there was no reason to suspect the testimony, chiefly where it was confirmed by other Circumstances, was not only a reasonable thing, but it was the hinge on which all the Government and Justice in the World depended: Since all Courts of Justice proceed upon the Evidence given by Witnesses; for the use of Writings is but a thing more lately brought into the World. So then if the credibility of the thing, the innocence and disinterestedness of the Witnesses, the number of them, and the publickest Confirmations that could possibly be given, do concur to perswade us of any matter of Fact,

Fact, it is a vain thing to ſay, becauſe it is poſſible for ſo many Men to agree in a Lye, that therefore theſe have done it. In all other things a Man gives his aſſent when the credibility is ſtrong on the one ſide, and there appears nothing on the other ſide to balance it. So ſuch numbers agreeing in their Teſtimony to theſe Miracles; for inſtance of our Saviour's calling *Lazarus* out of the Grave the fourth day after he was buried, and his own riſing again after he was certainly dead; If there had been never ſo many Impoſtures in the World, no Man can with any reaſonable colour pretend this was one. We find both by the *Jewiſh* and *Roman* Writers that lived in that time, that our Saviour was Crucified:

and

and that all his Disciples and Followers believed certainly that he arose again. They believed this upon the Testimony of the Apostles, and of many hundreds who saw it, and died confirming it: They went about to perswade the World of it, with great Zeal, though they knew they were to get nothing by it, but Reproach and Sufferings: And by many wonders which they wrought they confirmed their Testimony. Now to avoid all this, by saying it is possible this might be a Contrivance, and to give no presumption to make it so much as probable, that it was so, is in plain *English* to say, *We are resolved let the Evidence be what it will, we will not believe it.*

He said, If a Man says he cannot

not believe, what help is there? for he was not maſter of his own Belief, and believing was at higheſt but a probable Opinion. To this I anſwered, That if a Man will let a wanton conceit poſſeſs his fancy againſt theſe things, and never conſider the Evidence for Religion on the other hand, but reject it upon a ſlight view of it, he ought not to ſay he cannot, but he will not believe: and while a Man lives an ill courſe of life, he is not fitly qualified to examine the matter aright. Let him grow calm and vertuous, and upon due application examine things fairly, and then let him pronounce according to his Conſcience, if to take it at its loweſt, the Reaſons on the one hand are not much ſtronger than

than they are on the other. For I found he was so possessed with the general conceit, that a mixture of Knaves and Fools had made all extraordinary things be easily believed, that it carried him away to determine the matter, without so much as looking on the Historical Evidence for the truth of *Christianity*, which he had not enquired into, but had bent all his Wit and Study to the support of the other side. As for that, that believing is at best but an Opinion; if the Evidence be but probable, it is so; but if it be such that it cannot be questioned, it grows as certain as knowledge: For we are no less certain that there is a great Town called *Constantinople*, the Seat of the *Ottoman* Empire, than

than that there is another called *London*. We as little doubt that Queen *Elizabeth* once Reigned, as that King *Charles* now Reigns in *England*. So that believing may be as certain, and as little ſubject to doubting as ſeeing or knowing.

There are two ſorts of believing Divine matters; the one is wrought in us by our comparing all the Evidences of matter of Fact, for the confirmation of *Revealed Religion*, with the Propheſies in the Scripture; where things were punctually predicted, ſome Ages before their completion; not in dark and doubtful words uttered like Oracles, which might bend to any Event: But in plain terms, as the foretelling that *Cyrus* by name ſhould ſend the

the *Jews* back from the Captivity, after the fixed period of seventy years: The History of the *Syrian* and *Egyptian* Kings so punctually foretold by *Daniel*, and the Prediction of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, with many Circumstances relating to it, made by our *Saviour*; joyning these to the excellent Rule and Design of the Scripture in matters of *Morality*, it is at least as reasonable to believe this as any thing else in the World. Yet such a believing as this, is only a general perswasion in the Mind, which has not that effect, till a Man applying himself to the Directions set down in the Scriptures (which upon such Evidence cannot be denied to be as reasonable, as for a Man to follow the Prescriptions of a learned

learned Phyſician, and when the Rules are both good and eaſie, to ſubmit to them for the recovering of his health) and by following theſe, finds a power entring within him, that frees him from the ſlavery of his Appetites and Paſſions, that exalts his Mind above the accidents of Life, and ſpreads an inward purity in his Heart, from which a ſerene and calm Joy ariſes within him: And good Men by the efficacy theſe Methods have upon them, and from the returns of their Prayers, and other endeavours, grow aſſured that theſe things are true, and anſwerable to the Promiſes they find regiſtred in Scripture. All this, he ſaid might be fancy: But to this I anſwered, That as it were un-

reasonable to tell a Man that is abroad, and knows he is awake, that perhaps he is in a dream, and in his Bed, and only thinks he is abroad, or that as some go about in their sleep, so he may be asleep still: So good and religious Men know, though others may be abused by their fancies, that they are under no such deception; and find they are neither hot nor *Enthusiastical*, but under the Power of calm and clear Principles. All this he said he did not understand, and that it was to assert or beg the thing in Question, which he could not comprehend.

As for the possibility of Revelation, it was a vain thing to deny it: For as God gives us the sense of seeing material Ob-

Objects by our Eyes, and opened in ſome a capacity of apprehending high and ſublime things, of which other Men ſeemed utterly incapable: So it was a weak aſſertion that God cannot awaken a power in ſome Mens Minds, to apprehend and know ſome things, in ſuch a manner that others are not capable of it. This is not half ſo incredible to us as ſight is to a blind Man, who yet may be convinced there is a ſtrange power of ſeeing that governs Men, of which he finds himſelf deprived. As for the capacity put into ſuch Mens hands to deceive the World, we are at the ſame time to conſider, that beſides the Probity of their Tempers, it cannot be thought but God can ſo forci-

bly bind up a Man in ſome things that it ſhould not be in his power to deliver them otherwiſe than as he gives him in Commiſſion: Beſides the Confirmation of Miracles are a Divine Credential to warrant ſuch perſons in what they deliver to the World; which cannot be imagined can be joyned to a Lye, ſince this were to put the Omnipotence of God, to atteſt that which no honeſt Man will do. For the buſineſs of the Fall of Man, and other things of which we cannot perhaps give our ſelves a perfect account, we who cannot fathom the Secrets of the Councel of God, do very unreaſonably to take on us to reject an excellent Syſtem of good and holy Rules, becauſe we cannot ſatisfie

ſatisfie our ſelves about ſome difficulties in them. Common Experience tells us, There is a great diſorder in our Natures, which is not eaſily rectified: All *Philoſophers* were ſenſible of it, and every Man that deſigns to govern himſelf by Reaſon, feels the ſtruggle between it and Nature: So that it is plain, there is a Lapſe of the high Powers of the Soul.

But why, ſaid he, could not this be rectified, by ſome plain Rules given; but Men muſt come and ſhew a trick to perſwade the World they ſpeak to them in the Name of God? I anſwered, That Religion being a deſign to recover and ſave Mankind, was to be ſo opened as to awaken and work upon all ſorts of People; and gene-

rally Men of a ſimplicity of Mind, were thoſe that were the fitteſt Objects for God to ſhew his favour to: Therefore it was neceſſary that Meſſengers ſent from Heaven ſhould appear with ſuch allarming Evidences, as might awaken the World, and prepare them by ſome aſtoniſhing Signs, to liſten to the Doctrine they were to deliver. *Philoſophy*, that was only a matter of fine Speculation, had few Votaries: And as there was no Authority in it to bind the World to believe its Dictates, ſo they were only received by ſome of nobler and refined Natures, who could apply themſelves to, and delight in ſuch Notions. But true Religion was to be built on a Foundation, that ſhould carry more weight

weight on it, and to have ſuch Convictions, as might not only reach thoſe who were already diſpoſed to receive them, but rouſe up ſuch as without great and ſenſible excitation would have otherwiſe ſlept on in their ill Courſes.

Upon this and ſome ſuch Occaſions, I told him, I ſaw the ill uſe he made of his Wit, by which he ſlurred the graveſt things with a ſlight daſh of his Fancy; and the Pleaſure he found in ſuch wanton Expreſſions, as calling the doing of Miracles, *The ſhewing of a trick*, did really keep him from examining them, with that care which ſuch things required.

For the *Old Teſtament*, we are ſo remote from that time, we have ſo little knowledge

of the Language in which it was writ, have ſo imperfect an account of the Hiſtory of thoſe Ages, know nothing of their Cuſtoms, Forms of Speech, and the ſeveral Periods they might have, by which they reckoned their time, that it is rather a wonder we ſhould underſtand ſo much of it, than that many paſſages in it ſhould be ſo dark to us. The chief uſe it has to us *Chriſtians*, is, that from Writings which the *Jews* acknowledge to be divinely inſpired, it is manifeſt the *Meſſias* was promiſed before the Deſtruction of their Temple; which being done long ago: And theſe Propheſies agreeing to our Saviour, and to no other, here is a great Confirmation given to the Goſpel. But though

though many things in theſe Books could not be underſtood by us, who live above 3000 Years after the chief of them were written, it is no ſuch extraordinary matter,

For that of the deſtruction of the *Canaanites* by the *Iſraelites*; It is to be conſidered, that if God had ſent a Plague among them all, that could not have been found fault with. If then God had a Right to take away their Lives, without Injuſtice or cruelty, he had a Right to appoint others to do it, as well to execute it by a more immediate way: And the taking away People by the Sword, is a much gentler way of dying, than to be ſmitten with a Plague or a Famine. And for the Children that were Innocent

cent of their Fathers faults, God could in another state make that up to them. So all the difficulty is, Why were the *Israelites* commanded to execute a thing of such Barbarity? But this will not seem so hard, if we consider that this was to be no Precedent for future times; since they did not do it but upon special Warrant and Commission from Heaven, evidenc'd to all the World by such mighty Miracles as did plainly shew, That they were particularly design'd by God to be the Executioners of his Justice. And God by implying them in so severe a Service, intended to possess them with great horrour of Idolatry, which was punished in so extreme a manner.

For

For the Rites of their Religion, we can ill judge of them, except we perfectly underſtood the Idolatries round about them; to which we find they were much inclined: So they were to be bent by other Rites to an extreme averſion from them: And yet by the pomp of many of their Ceremonies and Sacrifices, great Indulgences were given to a People naturally fond of a viſible ſplendor in Religious Worſhip. In all which, if we cannot deſcend to ſuch ſatisfactory Anſwers in every particular, as a curious Man would deſire, it is no wonder. The long interval of time, and other accidents, have worn out thoſe things which were neceſſary to give us a clearer light into the meaning of

of them. And for the Story of the Creation, how far some things in it may be Parabolical, and how far Historical, has been much disputed; there is nothing in it that may not be historically true. For if it be acknowledged that Spirits can form Voices in the Air, for which we have as good Authority as for any thing in History, then it is no wonder that *Eve*, being so lately created, might be deceived, and think a *Serpent* spake to her, when the Evil Spirit framed the Voice.

But in all these things I told him he was in the wrong way, when he examined the business of Religion, by some dark parts of Scripture: Therefore I desired him to consider the whole Contexture of the *Christian*

Chriſtian Religion, the Rules it gives, and the Methods it preſcribes. Nothing can conduce more to the Peace, Order and Happineſs of the World, than to be governed by its Rules. Nothing is more for the Intereſts of every man in particular: The Rules of Sobriety, Temperance and Moderation, were the beſt Preſervers of Life, and which was perhaps more, of Health, Humility, contempt of the Vanities of the World, and the being well employed, raiſes a Man's Mind to a freedom from the Follies and Temptations that haunted the greateſt part. Nothing was ſo Generous and Great, as to ſupply the Neceſſities of the Poor, and to forgive Injuries: Nothing raiſed and maintained a Man's

a Man's Reputation so much, as to be exactly just, and merciful, kind, charitable and compassionate: Nothing opened the power's of a Man's Soul so much as a calm Temper, a serene Mind, free of Passion and Disorder: Nothing made Societies, Families, and Neighbourhoods so happy, as when these Rules which the Gospel prescribes, took place, *Of doing as we would have others do to us, and loving our Neighbours as our selves.*

The *Christian Worship* was also plain and simple; suitable to so pure a Doctrine. The Ceremonies of it were few and significant, as the admission to it by a washing with Water, and the Memorial of our Saviour's Death in *Bread* and *Wine*; The Motives in it to perswade to this

this Purity, were ſtrong: That God ſees us, and will judge us for all our Actions: That we ſhall be for ever happy or miſerable, as we paſs our Lives here: The Example of our Saviour's Life, and the great expreſſions of his Love in Dying for us, are mighty Engagements to Obey and Imitate him. The plain way of Expreſſion uſed by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, ſhews there was no Artifice, where there was ſo much Simplicity uſed: There were no Secrets kept only among the Prieſts, but every thing was open to all *Chriſtians:* The Rewards of Holineſs are not entirely put over to another ſtate, but good Men are ſpecially bleſt with Peace in their Conſciences, great Joy in the

the Confidence they have of the Love of God, and of seeing Him for ever: And often a signal Course of Blessings follows them in their whole lives: But if at other times Calamities fell on them, these were so much mitigated by the Patience they were taught, and the inward Assistances, with which they were furnished, that even those Crosses were converted to Blessings.

I desired he would lay all these things together, and see what he could except to them, to make him think this was a Contrivance. Interest appears in all Humane Contrivances: Our Saviour plainly had none; He avoided Applause, withdrew himself from the Offers of a Crown: He submitted to Poverty

Poverty and Reproach, and much Contradiction in his Life, and to a moſt ignominious and painful Death. His Apoſtles had none neither, they did not pretend either to Power or Wealth; but delivered a Doctrine that muſt needs condemn them, if they ever made ſuch uſe of it: They declared their Commiſſion fully without reſerves till other times: They Recorded their own Weakneſs: Some of them wrought with their own hands; and when they received the Charities of their Converts, it was not ſo much to ſupply their own Neceſſities, as to diſtribute to others: They knew they were to ſuffer much for giving their Teſtimonies, to what they had ſeen and heard: In which ſo many in a thing ſo

visible, as Christ's Resurrection and Ascension, and the Effusion of the Holy Ghost which He had promised, could not be deceived: And they gave such publick Confirmations of it, by the Wonders they themselves wrought, that great multitudes were converted to a Doctrine, which, besides the opposition it gave to Lust and Passion, was born down and persecuted for 300 years; and yet its force was such, that it not only weathered out all those Storms, but even grew and spread vastly under them. *Pliny* about threescore years after, found their Numbers great, and their Lives innocent: And even *Lucian* amidst all his Raillery, gives a high Testimony to their Charity and Contempt of Life, and the other

other Vertues of the *Chriſtians*; which is likewiſe more than once done by Malice it ſelf, *Julian* the Apoſtate.

If a Man will lay all this in one Balance, and compare with it the few Exceptions brought to it, he will ſoon find how ſtrong the one, and how ſlight the other are. Therefore it was an improper way, to begin at ſome Cavils about ſome Paſſages in the *New Teſtament*, or the *Old*, and from thence to prepoſſeſs one's Mind againſt the whole. The right method had been firſt to conſider the whole matter, and from ſo general a view to deſcend to more particular Enquiries: whereas they ſuffered their Minds to be foreſtalled with Prejudices; ſo that they never examined the matter impartially.

To the greatest part of this he seemed to assent, only he excepted to the belief of Mysteries in the *Christian Religion*; which he thought no Man could do, since it is not in a Man's Power to believe that which he cannot comprehend: and of which he can have no Notion. The believing Mysteries, he said, made way for all the Juglings of Priests, for they getting the People under them in that Point, set out to them what they pleased; and giving it a hard Name, and calling it a *Mystery*, the People were tamed, and easily believed it. The restraining a Man from the use of Women, except one in the way of Marriage, and denying the remedy of Divorce, he thought unreasonable Impositions

ſtions on the Freedom of Mankind: And the buſineſs of the Clergy, and their Maintenance, with the belief of ſome Authority and Power, conveyed in their Orders, look'd, as he thought, like a piece of contrivance: And why, ſaid he, muſt a Man tell me, I cannot be ſaved, unleſs I believe things againſt my Reaſon, and then that I muſt pay him for telling me of them? Theſe were all the Exceptions which at any time I heard from him to *Chriſtianity*. To which I made theſe Anſwers.

For Myſteries, it is plain there is in every thing ſomewhat that is unaccountable. How Animals or Men are formed in their Mothers Bellies, how Seeds grow in the Earth, how the

Souls dwells in the Body, and acts and moves it; How we retain the Figures of so many words or things in our Memories, and how we draw them out so easily and orderly in our Thoughts or Discourses? How Sight and Hearing were so quick and distinct, how we move, and how Bodies were compounded and united? These things if we follow them into all the Difficulties, that we may raise about them, will appear every whit as unaccountable as any Mystery of Religion: And a blind or deaf Man would judge Sight or Hearing as incredible, as any Mystery may be judged by us: For our Reason is not equal to them. In the same rank, different degrees of Age or Capacity raise some far above

above others: So that Children cannot fathome the Learning, nor weak Perſons the Counſels of more illuminated Minds: Therefore it was no wonder if we could not underſtand the Divine Eſſence: We cannot imagine how two ſuch different Natures as a Soul and a Body ſhould ſo unite together, and be mutually affected with one anothers Concerns; and how the Soul has one Principle of Reaſon, by which it acts Intellectually, and another of Life by which it joyns to the Body and acts Vitally; two Principles ſo widely differing both in their Nature and Operation, and yet united in one and the ſame Perſon. There might be as many hard Arguments brought againſt the poſſibility

of these things, which yet every one knows to be true, from Speculative Notions, as against the Mysteries mentioned in the Scriptures. As that of the *Trinity*, That in one Essence there are three different Principles of Operation, which, for want of terms fit to express them by, we call *Persons*, and are called in Scripture *The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; and that the Second of these did unite Himself in a most intimate manner with the Humane Nature of Jesus Christ: And that the Sufferings he underwent, were accepted of God as a Sacrifice for our Sins; Who thereupon conferred on Him a Power of granting Eternal Life to all that submit to the Terms on which He offers it: And that the matter

matter of which our Bodies once conſiſted, which may be as juſtly called the Bodies we laid down at our Deaths, as theſe can be ſaid to be the Bodies which we formerly lived in, being refined and made more ſpiritual, ſhall be reunited to our Souls, and become a fit Inſtrument for them in a more perfect Eſtate: And that God inwardly bends and moves our Wills, by ſuch Impreſſions, as he can make on our Bodies and Minds.

Theſe, which are the chief Myſteries of our Religion, are neither ſo unreaſonable, that any other Objection lies againſt them, but this, that they agree not with our common Notions, nor ſo unaccountable that ſomewhat like them, cannot be

being assigned in other things, which are believed really to be, though the manner of them cannot be apprehended: So this ought not to be any just Objection to the submission of our Reason to what we cannot so well conceive, provided our belief of it be well grounded. There have been too many Niceties brought indeed, rather to darken than explain these: They have been defended by weak Arguments, and illustrated by Similies not always so very apt and pertinent: And new subtilties have been added, which have rather perplexed than cleared them. All this cannot be denied; the Opposition of *Hereticks* anciently, occasioned too much Curiosity among the *Fathers*: Which

Which the *School-men* have wonderfully advanced of late times. But if Myſteries were received, rather in the ſimplicity in which they are delivered in the Scriptures, than according to the diſcantings of fanciful Men upon them, they would not appear much more incredible, than ſome of the common Objects of ſenſe and perception. And it is a needleſs fear that if ſome Myſteries are acknowledged, which are plainly mentioned in the *New Teſtament*, it will then be in the power of the Prieſts to add more at their pleaſure. For it is an abſurd Inference from our being bound to aſſent to ſome truths about the Divine Eſſence, of which the manner is not underſtood, to argue that therefore

fore in an Object presented duly to our Senses, such as *Bread* and *Wine*, we should be bound to believe against their Testimony, that it is not what our Senses perceived it to be, but the whole *Flesh* and *Blood* of *Christ*; an entire Body being in every Crumb and Drop of it. It is not indeed in a Man's power to believe thus against his Sense and Reason, where the Object is proportioned to them, and fitly applied, and the Organs are under no indisposition or disorder. It is certain that no Mystery is to be admitted, but upon very clear and express Authorities from Scripture, which could not reasonably be understood in any other sense. And though a Man cannot from an explicite Notion

Notion of a Myſtery, for then it would be no longer a Myſtery; yet in general he may believe a thing to be, though he cannot give himſelf a particular account of the way of it; or rather, though he cannot anſwer ſome Objections which lie againſt it. We know we believe many ſuch in humane matters, which are more within our reach; and it is very unreaſonable to ſay, we may not do it in divine things, which are much more above our Apprehenſions.

For the ſevere Reſtraint of the uſe of Women, it is hard to deny that Priviledge to Jeſus Chriſt as a Law-giver, to lay ſuch Reſtraints, as all inferiour Legiſlators do; who when they find the Liberties their Subjects

jects take, prove hurtful to them, ſet ſuch Limits, and make ſuch Regulations, as they judge neceſſary and expedient. It cannot be ſaid but the Reſtraint of Appetite is neceſſary in ſome Inſtances: and if it is neceſſary in theſe, perhaps other Reſtraints are no leſs neceſſary, to fortifie and ſecure them. For if it be acknowledged that Men have a property in their Wives and Daughters, ſo that to defile the one, or corrupt the other, is an unjuſt and injurious thing; It is certain, that except a Man carefully governs his Appetites, he will break through theſe Reſtraints: And therefore our Saviour knowing that nothing could ſo effectually deliver the World from the miſchief of unreſtrained Appetite, as ſuch a Con-

a Confinement, might very reaſonably enjoyn it. And in all ſuch Caſes we are to balance the Inconveniences on both hands; and where we find they are heavieſt, we are to acknowledge the Equity of the Law. On the one hand there is no prejudice, but the reſtraint of Appetite; On the other, are the miſchiefs of being given up to Pleaſure, of running inordinately into it, of breaking the quiet of our own Family at home, and of others abroad; the ingaging into much Paſſion, the doing many falſe and impious things to compaſs what is deſired, the waſte of Mens Eſtates, Time, and Health. Now let any Man judge, Whether the prejudices on this ſide, are not greater, than

than that single one of the other side, of being denied some pleasure? For *Polygamy*, it is but reasonable since Women are equally concern'd in the Laws of Marriage, that they should be considered as well as Men: But in a state of *Polygamy* they are under great misery and jealousie, and are indeed barbarously used. Man being also of a sociable Nature, Friendship and Converse were among the Primitive Intendments of Marriage, in which as far as the Man may excel the Wife in greatness of Mind, and height of Knowledge, the Wife someway makes that up with her Affection and tender Care: So that from both happily mixed, there arises a Harmony, which is to vertuous Minds one

one of the greateſt joys of life: But all this is gone in a ſtate of *Polygamy*, which occaſions perpetual Jarrings and Jealouſies. And the Variety does but engage Men to a freer Range of Pleaſure, which is not to be put in the Balance with the far greater Miſchiefs that muſt follow the other courſe. So that it is plain, Our Saviour conſidered the Nature of Man, what it could bear, and what was fit for it, when he ſo reſtrained us in theſe our Liberties. And for Divorce, a power to break that Bond would too much encourage married Perſons in the little quarrellings that may riſe between them, if it were in their Power to depart one from another. For when they know that cannot be, and

that they must live and die together, it does naturally incline them to lay down their Resentments, and to endeavour to live as well together as they can. So the Law of the Gospel being a Law of Love, designed to engage *Christians* to mutual love; it was fit that all such Provisions should be made, as might advance and maintain it: and all such Liberties be taken away, as are apt to enkindle or foment strife. This might fall in some instances to be uneasie and hard enough, but Laws consider what falls out most commonly, and cannot provide for all particular Cases. The best Laws are in some Instances very great Grievances. But the Advantages being balanced with the Inconvenienees,

Mea-

Meaſures are to be-taken accordingly. Upon this whole matter I ſaid, That Pleaſure ſtood in oppoſition to other Conſiderations of great weight, and ſo the deciſion was eaſie. And ſince our Saviour offers us ſo great Rewards, it is but reaſonable he have a Priviledge of loading theſe Promiſes with ſuch Conditions, as are not in themſelves grateful to our natural Inclinations: For all that propoſe high Rewards, have thereby a right to exact difficult performances.

To this he ſaid, We are ſure the terms are difficult, but are not ſo ſure of the Rewards. Upon this I told him, That we have the ſame aſſurance of the Rewards, that we have of the

other parts of *Christian Religion.* We have the Promises of God made to us by Christ, confirmed by many Miracles: We have the Earnests of these, in the quiet and peace which follows a good Conscience; and in the Resurrection of Him from the dead, who hath promised to raise us up. So that the Reward is sufficiently assured to us: And there is no reason it should be given to us, before the Conditions are performed on which the Promises are made. It is but reasonable that we should trust God, and do our Duty, *In hopes of that Eternal Life, which God who cannot lye, hath promised.* The Difficulties are not so great, as those which sometimes the commonest concerns of

of Life bring upon us: The learning ſome Trades or Sciences, the governing our Health and Affairs, bring us often under as great ſtraights. So that it ought to be no juſt predjudice, that there are ſome things in Religion that are uneaſie, ſince this is rather the effect of our corrupt Natures, which are farther depraved by vicious habits, and can hardly turn to any new courſe of life, without ſome pain, than of the Dictates of *Chriſtianity*, which are in themſelves juſt and reaſonable, and will be eaſie to us when renew'd, and in a good meaſure reſtor'd to our Primitive Integrity.

As for the Exceptions he had to the Maintenance of the Clergy, and the Authority to

which they pretended if they stretched their Designs too far, the Gospel did plainly reprove them for it: So that it was very suitable to that Church, which was so grosly faulty this way, to take the Scriptures out of the hands of the People, since they do so manifestly disclaim all such Practices. The Priests of the true *Christian Religion* have no secrets among them, which the World must not know, but are only an Order of Men dedicated to God, to attend on Sacred things, who ought to be holy in a more peculiar manner, since they are to handle the things of God. It was necessary that such Persons should have a due Esteem paid them, and a fit Maintenance appointed for them, that so they might

might be preſerv'd from the Contempt that follows Poverty, and the Diſtractions which the providing againſt it might otherways involve them in: And as in the Order of the World, it was neceſſary for the ſupport of Magiſtracy and Government, and for preſerving its Eſteem, that ſome ſtate be uſed (though it is a happineſs when Great Men have Philoſophical Minds, to deſpiſe the Pageantry of it.) So the plentiful ſupply of the Clergy, if well uſed and applied by them, will certainly turn to the Advantage of Religion. And if ſome Men either through Ambition or Covetouſneſs uſed indirect Means, or ſervile Compliances to aſpire to ſuch Dignities, and being poſſeſſed of

them, applied their Wealth either to Luxury or vain Pomp, or made great Fortunes out of it for their Families; these were personal failings in which the Doctrine of Christ was not concerned.

He upon that told me plainly, There was nothing that gave him, and many others, a more secret encouragement in their ill ways, than that those who pretended to believe, lived so that they could not be thought to be in earnest, when they said it: For he was sure *Religion* was either a meer Contrivance, or the most important thing that could be: So that if he once believed, he would set himself in great earnest to live suitably to it. The aspirings that he had observed at Court, of some

of

of the Clergy, with the ſervile ways they took to attain to Preferment, and the Animoſities among thoſe of ſeveral Parties, about trifles, made him often think they ſuſpected the things were not true, which in their Sermons and Diſcourſes they ſo earneſtly recommended. Of this he had gathered many Inſtances; I knew ſome of them were Miſtakes and Calumnies; yet I could not deny but ſomething of them might be too true: And I publiſh this the more freely, to put all that pretend to Religion, chiefly thoſe that are dedicated to holy Functions, in mind of the great Obligation that lies on them to live ſuitably to their Profeſſion: Since otherwiſe a great deal of the Irreligion

gion and Atheism that is among us, may too justly be charged on them: For wicked Men are delighted out of measure when they discover ill things in them, and conclude from thence not only that they are Hypocrites, but that Religion it self is a cheat.

But I said to him upon this Head, That though no good Man could continue in the practice of any known sin, yet such might, by the violence or surprise of a Temptation, to which they are liable as much as others, be of a sudden overcome to do an ill thing, to their great grief all their life after. And then it was a very unjust Inference, upon some few failings, to conclude that such Men do not believe themselves.

But

But how bad ſoever many are, it cannot be denied but there are alſo many both of the Clergy and Laity, who give great and real Demonſtrations of the power Religion has over them; in their Contempt of the World, the ſtrictneſs of their Lives, their readineſs to forgive Injuries, to relieve the Poor, and to do good on all Occaſions: And yet even theſe may have their failings, either in ſuch things wherein their Conſtitutions are weak, or their Temptations ſtrong and ſudden: And in all ſuch caſes we are to judge of Men, rather by the courſe of their Lives, than by the Errors, that they through infirmity or ſurprize may have ſlipt into.

Theſe

Theſe were the chief Heads we diſcourſed on; and as far as I can remember, I have faithfully repeated the ſubſtance of our Arguments: I have not concealed the ſtrongeſt things he ſaid to me, but though I have not enlarged on all the Excurſions of his Wit in ſetting them off, yet I have given them their full ſtrength, as he expreſſed them; and as far as I could recollect, have uſed his own words: So that I am afraid ſome may cenſure me for ſetting down theſe things ſo largely, which Impious Men may make an ill uſe of, and gather together to encourage and defend themſelves in their Vices: But if they will compare them with the Anſwers made to them, and the Senſe that

that ſo great and refined a Wit had of them afterwards, I hope they may through the bleſſing of God be not altogether ineffectual.

The iſſue of all our Diſcourſe was this; he told me, He ſaw Vice and Impiety were as contrary to humane Society, as wild Beaſts let looſe would be; and therefore he firmly reſolved to change the whole method of his Life; to become ſtrictly juſt and true, to be Chaſte and Temperate, to forbear Swearing and irreligious Diſcourſe, to worſhip and pray to his Maker: And that though he was not arrived at a full perſwaſion of *Chriſtianity*, he would never employ his Wit more to run it down, or to corrupt others.

Of

Of which I have since a further assurance, from a Person of Quality, who conversed much with him, the last year of his life; to whom he would often say, That he was happy, if he did believe, and that he would never endeavour to draw him from it.

To all this I answered, That a Vertuous Life would be very uneasie to him, unless Vicious Inclinatious were removed: It would otherwise be a perpetual constraint. Nor could it be effected without an inward Principle to change him; and that was only to be had by applying himself to God for it in frequent and earnest Prayers: And I was sure if his Mind were once cleared of these Disorders, and cured of those Distem-

Diſtempers, which Vice brought on it, ſo great an Underſtanding would ſoon ſee through all thoſe ſlights of Wit, that do feed Atheiſm and Irreligion; which have a falſe glittering in them, that dazles ſome weak-ſighted Minds, who have not capacity enough to penetrate further than the Surfaces of things: and ſo they ſtick in theſe Toyls, which the ſtrength of his Mind would ſoon break thorough, if it were once freed from thoſe things that depreſſed and darkened it.

At this paſs he was when he went from *London*, about the beginning of *April*: He had not been long in the Country when he thought he was ſo well, that being to go to his Eſtate in *Somerſetſhire* he rode thither

thither Post. This heat and violent motion did so inflame an Ulcer, that was in his Bladder, that it raised a very great pain in those parts: Yet he with much difficulty came back by Coach to the Lodge at *Woodstock Park*. He was then wounded both in Body and Mind: He understood Physick and his own Constitution and Distemper so well, that he concluded he could hardly recover: For the Ulcer broke, and vast quantities of purulent matter past with his Urine. But now the Hand of God touched him, and as he told me, It was not only a general dark Melancholy over his Mind, such as he had formerly felt; but a most penetrating cutting Sorrow. So that though in his Body

Body he ſuffered extream pain, for ſome Weeks, yet the Agonies of his Mind ſometimes ſwallow'd up the ſenſe of what he felt in his Body. He told me, and gave it me in charge to tell it to one for whom he was much concern'd, that though there were nothing to come after this life, yet all the Pleaſures he had ever known in Sin, were not worth that torture he had felt in his Mind: He conſidered he had not only neglected and diſhonoured, but had openly defy'd his Maker, and had drawn many others into the like Impieties: So that he looked on himſelf as one that was in great danger of being damn'd. He then ſet himſelf wholly to turn to God unfeignedly, and to do all that was

possible in that little remainder of his life which was before him, to redeem those great portions of it that he had formerly so ill employed. The Minister that attended constantly on him, was that good and worthy Man Mr. *Parsons*, his Mothers Chaplain, who hath since his Death preached, according to the Directions he received from him, his Funeral Sermon; in which there are so many remarkable Passages, that I shall refer my *Reader* to them, and will repeat none of them here, that I may not thereby lessen his desire to edifie himself by that excellent Discourse, which hath given so great and so general a satisfaction to all good and judicious *Readers*. I shall speak cursorily of every thing,

thing, but that which I had immediately from himſelf: He was viſited every Week of his Sickneſs by his *Dioceſan*, that truly Primitive Prelate, the Lord Biſhop of *Oxford*; who though he lived ſix miles from him, yet looked on this as ſo important a piece of his Paſtoral Care, that he went often to him; and treated him with that decent plaineſs and freedom which is ſo natural to him; and took care alſo that he might not on terms more eaſie than ſafe, be at peace with himſelf. Dr. *Marſhal* the Learned and worthy *Rector* of *Lincoln*-Colledge in *Oxford*, being the Miniſter of the Pariſh, was alſo frequently with him; and by theſe helps he was ſo directed and ſupported, that he might not on the

one hand satisfie himself with too superficial a Repentance, nor on the other hand be out of measure oppressed with a Sorrow without hope. As soon as I heard he was ill, but yet in such a condition that I might write to him, I wrote a Letter to the best purpose I could. He ordered one that was then with him, to assure me it was very welcome to him: but not satisfied with that, he sent me an Answer, which, as the Countess of *Rochester* his Mother told me, he dictated every word, and then signed it. I was once unwilling to have publish'd it because of a Complement in it to my self, far above my merit, and not very well suiting with his Condition.

But

But the ſenſe he expreſſes in it of the Change then wrought on him, hath upon ſecond thoughts prevail'd with me to publiſh it, leaving out what concerns my ſelf.

Woodſtock-Park,
June 25. 1680. *Oxfordſhire.*

My moſt Honour'd Dr. Burnett,

MY *Spirits and Body decay ſo equally together, that I ſhall write you a Letter as weak as I am in Perſon. I begin to value Church-men above all Men in the World,* &c. *If God be yet pleaſed*

to spare me longer in this World, I hope in your Conversation to be exalted to that degree of Piety, that the World may see how much I abhor what I so long loved, and how much I glory in Repentance, and in God's Service. Bestow your Prayers upon me, that God would spare me (if it be his good Will) to shew a true Repentance and Amendment of Life for the time to come: Or else if the Lord pleaseth to put an end to my wordly being now, that He would mercifully accept of my Death-Bed Repentance

pentance, and perform that Promiſe that He hath been pleaſed to make, That at what time ſoever a Sinner doth Repent, he would receive him. *Put up theſe Prayers moſt dear Doctor, to Almighty God for your moſt Obedient and Languiſhing Servant.*

Rocheſter.

He told me when I ſaw him, That he hoped I would come to him upon that general Inſinuation of the deſire he had of my Company; and he was loth to write more plainly, not knowing whether I could eaſily ſpare ſo much time. I told him, that on the other hand, I looked on it as a preſumption to come ſo far when he was in ſuch excellent hands; and tho' perhaps the freedom formerly between us, might have excuſed it with thoſe to whom it was known; yet it might have the appearance of ſo much Vanity, to ſuch as were ſtrangers to it; ſo that till I received his Letter, I did not think it convenient to come to him: and then not hearing that there was any danger of a ſudden change, I

delayed

delayed going to him till the Twentieth of *July*. At my coming to his Houſe an accident fell out not worth mentioning, but that ſome have made a ſtory of it. His Servant, being a *French-man*, carried up my Name wrong, ſo that he miſtook it for another, who had ſent to him, that he would undertake his Cure, and he being reſolved not to meddle with him, did not care to ſee him: This miſtake laſted ſome hours, with which I was the better contented, becauſe he was not then in ſuch a condition, that my being about him could have been of any uſe to him; for that Night was like to have been his laſt. He had a *Convulſion-Fit*, and raved; but *Opiates* being given him, after ſome hours reſt,

rest, his raving left him so entirely, that it never again returned to him.

I cannot easily express the Transport he was in, when he awoke and saw me by him: He brake out in the tendrest Expressions concerning my kindness in coming so far to see *such a One*, using terms of great abhorence concerning himself which I forbear to relate. He told me, as his strength served him at several snatches, for he was then so low, that he could not hold up discourse long at once, what sense he had of his past life; what sad apprehension for having so offended his Maker, and dishonoured his Redeemer: What Horrors he had gone through, and how much his Mind was turned to call

call on God, and on his crucified Saviour: ſo that he hoped he ſhould obtain Mercy, for he believed he had ſincerely repented; and had now a calm in his Mind after that ſtorm that he had been in for ſome Weeks. He had ſtrong Apprehenſions and Perſwaſions of his admittance to Heaven; of which he ſpake once not without ſome extraordinary Emotion. It was indeed the only time that he ſpake with any great warmth to me: For his Spirits were then low, and ſo far ſpent, that though thoſe about him told me, He had expreſſed formerly great fervour in his Devotions; yet Nature was ſo much ſunk, that theſe were in a great meaſure fallen off. But he made me pray often

often with him; and spoke of his Conversion to God as a thing now grown up in him to a setled and calm serenity. He was very anxious to know my Opinion of a Death-Bed Repentance. I told him, That before I gave any Resolution in that, it would be convenient that I should be acquainted more particularly with the Circumstances and progress of his Repentance.

Upon this he satisfied me in many particulars. He said, He was now perswaded both of the truth of *Christianity*, and of the power of inward Grace, of which he gave me this strange account. He said, Mr. *Parsons* in order to his Conviction, read to him the 53. *Chapter* of the Propheſie of *Isaiah*,

Iſaiah, and compared *that* with the Hiſtory of our Saviour's Paſſion, that he might there ſee a Propheſie concerning it written many Ages before it was done; which the *Jews* that blaſphemed Jeſus Chriſt ſtill kept in their hands, as a Book divinely inſpired. He ſaid to me, *That as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him, which did ſo enlighten his Mind, and convince him, that he could reſiſt it no longer: For the words had an authority which did ſhoot like Rays or Beams in his Mind; ſo that he was not only convinced by the Reaſonings he had about it, which ſatisfied his Underſtanding, but by a power which did ſo effectually conſtrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour, as if he had ſeen him*

him in the Clouds. He had made it be read so often to him, that he had got it by heart: and went through a great part of it in discourse with me, with a sort of heavenly Pleasure, giving me his Reflections on it. Some few I remember, *Who hath be-*
Ver. 1. *lieved our Report? Here*, he said, *was foretold the Opposition the Gospel was to meet with from such*
Ver. 2. *Wretches as he was. He hath no Form nor Comliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.* On this he said, *The meanness of his appearance and Person has made vain and foolish People disparage Him, because he came not in such a Fools-Coat as they delight in.* What he said on the other parts I do not well remember: and indeed I was so effected with what

what he ſaid then to me, that the general tranſport I was under during the whole diſcourſe, made me leſs capable to remember theſe Particulars, as I wiſh I had done.

He told me, That he had thereupon received the Sacrament with great ſatisfaction, and that was encreaſed by the pleaſure he had in his Ladies receiving it with him; who had been for ſome years miſled into the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, and he himſelf had been not a little Inſtrumental in procuring it, as he freely acknowledged. So that it was one of the joyfulleſt things that befell him in his Sickneſs, that he had ſeen that Miſchief removed, in which he had ſo great a Hand: And during

during his whole Sickness, he expressed so much tenderness and true kindness to his Lady, that as it easily defaced the remembrance of every thing wherein he had been in fault formerly, so it drew from her the most passionate care and concern for him that was possible; which indeed deserves a higher Character than is decent to give of a Person yet alive. But I shall confine my Discourse to the Dead.

He told me, He had overcome all his Resentments to all the World; so that he bore ill will to no Person, nor hated any upon personal accounts. He had given a true state of his Debts, and had ordered to pay them all, as far as his Estate that was not setled could go: and

and was confident that if all that was owing to him were paid to his Executors, his Creditors would be all ſatisfied. He ſaid, he found his Mind now poſſeſſed with another ſenſe of things, than ever he had formerly: He did not repine under all his pain, and in one of the ſharpeſt Fits he was under while I was with him, he ſaid, *He did willingly ſubmit*; and looking up to Heaven, ſaid, *God's Holy will be done, I bleſs him for all he does to me.* He profeſſed he was contented either to dye or live, as ſhould pleaſe God: And though it was a fooliſh thing for a Man to pretend to chuſe, whether he would die or live yet he wiſhed rather to die. He knew he could never be ſo well, that life ſhould be

comfortable to him. He was confident he ſhould be happy if he died, but he feared if he lived he might Relapſe: And then ſaid he to me, *In what a condition ſhall I be, if I Relapſe after all this?* *But*, he ſaid, *he truſted in the Grace and Goodneſs of God, and was reſolved to avoid all thoſe Temptations, that Courſe of Life, and Company, that was likely to inſnare him: And he deſired to live on no other account, but that he might by the change of his Manners ſome way take off the high Scandal his former Behaviour had given.* All theſe things at ſeveral times I had from him, beſides ſome Meſſages which very well became a dying Penitent to ſome of his former Friends, and a Charge to publiſh any thing con-

concerning him, that might be a mean to reclaim others. *Praying God, that as his life had done much hurt, ſo his death might do ſome good.*

Having underſtood all theſe things from him, and being preſſed to give him my Opinion plainly about his Eternal State; I told him, That though the Promiſes of the Goſpel did all depend upon a real change of Heart and Life, as the indiſpenſable condition upon which they were made; and that it was ſcarce poſſible to know certainly whether our Hearts are changed, unleſs it appeared in our lives; and the Repentance of moſt dying Men, being like the howlings of condemned Priſoners for Pardon, which flowed from no ſenſe of their

Crimes, but from the horrour of approaching Death; there was little reaſon to encourage any to hope much from ſuch Sorrowing; yet certainly if the Mind of a Sinner, even on a Death-Bed, be truly renewed and turned to God, ſo great is his Mercy, that he will receive him, even in that extremity. He ſaid, *He was ſure his Mind was entirely turned, and though Horrour had given him his firſt awaking, yet that was now grown up into a ſetled Faith and Converſion.*

There is but one prejudice lies againſt all this, to defeat the good Ends of Divine Providence by it upon others, as well as on himſelf; and that is that it was a part of his Diſeaſe, and that the lowneſs of his

his Spirits made ſuch an alteration in him, that he was not what he had formerly been: And this ſome have carried ſo far as to ſay, That he died mad: Theſe Reports are raiſed by thoſe who are unwilling that the laſt Thoughts or Words of a Perſon, every way ſo extraordinary, ſhould have any effect either on themſelves or others: And it is to be fear'd, that ſome may have ſo far ſeared their Conſciences, and exceeded the common Meaſures of Sin and Infidelity, that neither this Teſtimony, nor one coming from the Dead, would ſignifie much towards their Conviction. That this Lord was either mad or ſtupid, is a thing ſo notoriouſly untrue, that it is the greateſt Impudence

for any that were about him, to report it; and a very unreasonable Credulity in others to believe it. All the while I was with him, after he had slept out the disorders of the Fit he was in the first Night, he was not only without Ravings, but had a clearness in his Thoughts, in his Memory, in his Reflections on things and Persons, far beyond what I ever saw in a Person so low in his strength. He was not able to hold out long in Discourse, for his Spirits failed; but once for a half an hour, and often for a quarter of an hour, after he awakened, he had a Vivacity in his Discourse that was extraordinary, and in all things like himself. He called often for his Children, his Son the now Earl of *Rochester*, and

and his three Daughters, and ſpakē to them with a ſenſe and feeling that cannot be expreſſed in Writing. He called me once to look on them all, and ſaid, *See how good God has been to me, in giving me ſo many Bleſſings, and I have carried my ſelf to Him like an ungracious and unthankful Dog.* He once talked a great deal to me of Publick Affairs, and of many Perſons and things, with the ſame clearneſs of thought and expreſſion, that he had ever done before. So that by no ſign, but his Weakneſs of Body, and giving over Diſcourſe ſo ſoon, could I perceive a difference between what his Parts formerly were, and what they were then.

And that wherein the preſence of his Mind appeared

most was in the total change of an ill habit grown so much upon him, that he could hardly govern himself, when he was any ways heated, three Minutes without falling into it; I mean *Swearing*. He had acknowledged to me the former Winter, that he abhorred it as a base and indecent thing, and had set himself much to break it off; but he confessed that he was so over-power'd by that ill Custom, that he could not speak with any warmth, without repeated Oaths, which upon any sort of provocation, came almost naturally from him: But in his last Remorses this did so sensibly affect him, that by a resolute and constant watchfulness, the habit of it was perfectly master'd; so that upon

upon the returns of pain which were very ſevere and frequent upon him, the laſt day I was with him; or upon ſuch Diſpleaſures as People ſick or in pain are apt to take of a ſudden at thoſe about them: On all theſe Occaſions he never ſwore an Oath all the while I was there.

Once he was offended with the delay of one that he thought made not haſte enough, with ſomewhat he called for, and ſaid in a little heat, *That damned Fellow:* Soon after I told him, I was glad to find his Style ſo reformed, and that he had ſo entirely overcome that ill habit of ſwearing; only that word of calling any *damned*, which had returned upon him, was not decent. His Anſwer was

was, *Oh that Language of Friends which was so familiar to me, hangs yet about me: Sure none has deserved more to be damned than I have done.* And after he had humbly asked God Pardon for it, he desired me to call the Person to him, that he might ask him forgiveness; but I told him that was needless, for he had said it of one that did not hear it, and so could not be offended by it.

In this disposition of Mind did he continue all the while I was with him, four days together; he was then brought so low that all hopes of Recovery was gone. Much purulent matter came from him with his Urine, which he passed always with some pain; but one day with unexpressible torment: Yet

Yet he bore it decently, without breaking out into Repinings, or impatient Complaints. He imagined he had a Stone in his Paſſage, but it being ſearched, none was found. The whole ſubſtance of his Body was drained by the Ulcer, and nothing was left but Skin and Bone; and by lying much on his Back, the parts there began to mortifie. But he had been formerly ſo low, that he ſeemed as much paſt all hopes of life as now; which made him one Morning after a full and ſweet Nights reſt procured by *Laudanum*, given him without his knowledge, to fancy it was an effort of Nature, and to begin to entertain ſome hopes of Recovery: For he ſaid, He felt himſelf perfectly well, and that he

he had *nothing* ailing him, but an extream weakneſs, which might go off in time; and then he entertained me with the Scheme he had laid down for the reſt of his life, how retired, how ſtrict, and how ſtudious he intended to be: But this was ſoon over, for he quickly felt that it was only the effect of a good ſleep, and that he was ſtill in a very deſperate ſtate.

I thought to have left him on *Friday*, but not without ſome Paſſion, he deſired me to ſtay that day: There appeared no Symptom of preſent Death; and a Worthy Phyſician then with him, told me, That though he was ſo low that an accident might carry him away on a ſuddain; yet without that, he thought he might live yet ſome

ſome Weeks. So on *Saturday* at Four of the Clock in the Morning I left him, being the 24*th* of *July*. But I durſt not take leave of him; for he had expreſſed ſo great an unwillingneſs to part with me the day before, that if I had not preſently yielded to one days ſtay, it was like to have given him ſome trouble, therefore I thought it better to leave him without any Formality. Some hours after he asked for me, and when it was told him, I was gone, he ſeem'd to be troubled, and ſaid, *Has my Friend left me, then I ſhall die ſhortly.* After that he ſpake but once or twice till he died: He lay much ſilent: Once they heard him praying very devoutly.

And

And on *Monday* about Two of the Clock in the Morning, he died, without any *Convulsion*, or so much as a groan.

The

The CONCLUSION.

THus he lived, and thus he died in the Three and Thirtieth Year of his Age. Nature had fitted him for great things, and his Knowledge and Obſervation quali-fi'd him to have been one of the moſt extraordinary Men, not only of his Nation, but of the Age he lived in; and I do verily believe, that if God had thought fit to have continued him longer in the World, he had been the Wonder and Delight of all that knew him. But the infinite Wiſe God knew better what was fit for him, and what the Age deſerved. For Men who have ſo caſt off all

all sense of God and Religion, deserve not so signal a Blessing, as the Example and Conviction which the rest of his life might have given them. And I am apt to think that the Divine Goodness took Pity on him, and seeing the sincerity of his Repentance, would try and venture him no more in Circumstances of Temptation, perhaps too hard for Humane Frailty. Now he is at rest, and I am very confident enjoys the Fruits of his late, but sincere Repentance. But such as live, and still go on in their Sins and Impieties, and will not be awakened neither by this nor the other Allarms that are about their Ears, are, it seems, given up by God to a judicial Hardness and Impenitency.

Here

Here is a publick Inſtance of One who lived of their Side, but could not die of it: And though none of all our Libertines underſtood better than he, the ſecret Myſteries of Sin, had more ſtudied every thing that could ſupport a Man in it, and had more reſiſted all external means of Conviction than he had done; Yet when the Hand of God inwardly touched him, he could no longer *kick againſt thoſe Pricks*, but *humbled himſelf under that Mighty Hand*, and as he uſed often to ſay in his Prayers, *He who had ſo often denied Him found then no other Shelter but his Mercies and Compaſſions.*

I have written this Account with all the tenderneſs and caution I could uſe, and in whatſoever

I may have failed, I have been ſtrict in the truth of what I have related, remembring that of *Job, will ye lie for God?* Religion has Strength and Evidence enough in it ſelf, and needs no Support from Lyes, and made Stories. I do not pretend to have given the formal words that he ſaid, though I have done that where I could remember them. But I have written this with the ſame Sincerity, that I would have done, had I known I had been to die immediately after I had finiſhed it. I did not take Notes of our Diſcourſes laſt Winter after we parted; ſo I may have perhaps in the ſetting out of my Anſwers to him, have enlarged on ſeveral things both more fully and more regularly,

than

than I could ſay them in ſuch free Diſcourſes as we had. I am not ſo ſure of all I ſet down as ſaid by me, as I am of all ſaid by him to me. But yet the ſubſtance of the greateſt part, even of that, is the ſame.

It remains that I humbly and earneſtly beſeech all that ſhall take this Book in their hands, that they will conſider it entirely: and not wreſt ſome parts to an ill intention. God the Searcher of Hearts, knows with what Fidelity I have writ it: But if any will drink up only the Poiſon that may be in it, without taking alſo the Antidote here given to thoſe ill Principles; or conſidering the ſenſe that this great Perſon had of them, when he reflected

seriously on them; and will rather confirm themselves in their ill ways, by the Scruples and Objections which I set down, than be edified by the other parts of it: As I will look on it, as a great Infelicity, that I should have said any thing that may strengthen them in their Impieties; So the sincerity of my Intentions will, I doubt not, excuse me at his hands, to whom I offer up this small Service.

I have now performed, in the best manner I could, what was left on me by this Noble Lord, and have done with the part of an Historian. I shall in the next place say somewhat as a Divine. So extraordinary a Text does almost force a Sermon, though it is plain enough

it ſelf, and ſpeaks with ſo loud a Voice, that thoſe who are not awakened by it, will perhaps conſider nothing that I can ſay. If our Libertines will become ſo far ſober as to examine their former Courſe of Life, with that diſingagement and impartiality, which they muſt acknowledge a wiſe Man ought to uſe in things of greateſt Conſequence, and ballance the Account of what they have got by their Debaucheries, with the Miſchiefs they have brought on themſelves and others by them, they will ſoon ſee what a mad Bargain they have made. Some Diverſion, Mirth, and Pleaſure is all they can promiſe themſelves; but to obtain this, how many Evils are they to ſuffer? How have many waſted

their ſtrength, brought many Diſeaſes on their Bodies, and precipitated their Age in the purſuit of thoſe things? And as they bring old Age early on themſelves, ſo it becomes a miſerable ſtate of life to the greateſt part of them; *Gouts*, *Stranguries*, and other Infirmities, being ſevere Reckonings for their paſt Follies; not to mention the more loathſome Diſeaſes, with their no leſs loathſome and troubleſome Cures, which they muſt often go through, who deliver themſelves up to forbidden Pleaſures. Many are disfigur'd beſide, with the marks of their Intemperance and Lewdneſs, and which is yet ſadder, an infection is derived oftentimes on their Innocent, but unhappy Iſſue, who being deſcended

ſcended from ſo vitiated an Original, ſuffer for their Exceſſes. There Fortunes are profuſeſly waſted, both by their neglect of their Affairs, they being ſo buried in Vice, that they cannot employ either their Time or Spirits, ſo much exhauſted by Intemperance, to conſider them; and by that Prodical Expence which their Luſts put them upon. They ſuffer no leſs in their Credit, the chief mean to recover an intangled Eſtate; for that irregular Expence forces them to ſo many mean ſhifts, makes them ſo often falſe to all their Promiſes and Reſolutions, that they muſt needs feel how much they have loſt, that which a Gentleman, and Men of ingenuous tempers do ſometimes

prefer even to life it self, their Honour and Reputation. Nor do they suffer less in the Nobler powers of their Minds, which, by a long course of such dissolute Practices, come to sink and degenerate so far, that not a few, whose first Blossoms gave the most promising Hopes, have so wither'd, as to become incapable of great and generous Undertakings, and to be disabled to every thing, but to wallow like Swine in the filth of Sensuality, their Spirits being dissipated, and their Minds so nummed, as to be wholly unfit for business, and even indispos'd to think.

That this dear price should be paid for a little wild Mirth, or gross and corporal Pleasure, is a thing of such imparalelled

Folly,

Folly, that if there were not too many ſuch Inſtances before us, it might ſeem incredible. To all this we muſt add the Horrours that their ill Actions raiſe in them, and the hard ſhifts they are put to to ſtave off theſe, either by being perpetually drunk or mad, or by an habitual diſuſe of thinking and reflecting on their Actions, and (if theſe Arts will not perfectly quiet them) by taking Sanctuary in ſuch Atheiſtical Principles as may at leaſt mitigate the ſowrneſs of their thoughts, though they cannot abſolutely ſettle their Minds.

If the ſtate of Mankind and Humane Societies are conſidered, what Miſchiefs can be equal to thoſe which follow theſe Courſes

Courses. Such Persons are a Plague where ever they come; they can neither be trusted nor beloved, having cast off both Truth and Goodness, which procure Confidence and attract Love: they corrupt some by their ill Practices, and do irreparable Injuries to the rest; they run great Hazards, and put themselves to much trouble, and all this to do what is in their power to make Damnation as sure to themselves as possibly they can. What Influence this has on the whole Nation is but too visible; How the Bonds of Nature, Wedlock and all other Relations are quite broken. Vertue is thought an Antick piece of Formality, and Religion the effect of Cowardise or knavery: These

are

are the Men that would Reform the World, by bringing it under a new Syſtem of Intellectual and Moral Principles, but bate them a few bold and lewd Jeſts, what have they ever done, or deſigned to do, to make them be remembred, except it be with deteſtation? They are the Scorn of the preſent Age, and their Names muſt rot in the next. Here they have before them an Inſtance of one who was deeply corrupted with the Contagion which he firſt derived from others, but unhappily heightened it much himſelf. He was a Maſter indeed, and not a bare trifler with Wit, as ſome of theſe are who repeat, and that but ſcurvily, what they may have heard from him or ſome others,

others, and with Impudence and Laughter will face the World down, as if they were to teach it Wisdom; who, God knows, cannot follow one Thought a step further than as they have conned it; and take from them their borrow'd Wit and their mimical Humour, and they will presently appear what they indeed are, the least and lowest of Men.

If they will, or if they can think a little, I wish they would consider that by their own Principles, they cannot be sure that Religion is only a Contrivance; all they pretend to is only to weaken some Arguments that are brought for it: but they have not Brow enough to say, They can prove that their own Principles are true.

So

So that at most they bring their Cause no higher, than that it is possible *Religion* may not be true. But still it is possible it may be true, and they have no shame left that will deny that it is also probable it may be true; and if so, then what mad Men are they who run so great a hazard for nothing? By their own Confession it may be there is a God, a Judgment, and a Life to come; and if so, then He that believes these things, and lives according to them, as he enjoys a long course of Health and quiet of Mind, an innocent relish of many true Pleasures, and the Serenities which Vertue raises in him, with the good Will and Friendship which it procures him from others; So when he dies, if these things

prove

prove mistakes, he does not out-live his Error, nor shall it afterwards raise trouble or disquiet in him if he then ceases to be: But if these things be true, he shall be infinitely happy in that State, where his present small Services shall be so excessively rewarded. The *Libertines* on the other side, as they know they must die, so the thoughts of Death must be always melancholy to them; they can have no pleasant view of that which yet they know cannot be very far from them: The least painful *Idea* they can have of it is, that it is an extinction and ceasing to be, but they are not sure even of that. Some secret Whispers within make them, whether they will or not, tremble at the Apprehensions

henſions of another State; neither their Tinſel-Wit, nor ſuperficial Learning, nor their impotent Aſſaults upon the weak ſide, as they think, of Religion, nor the boldeſt Notions of Impiety, will hold them up then. Of all which I now preſent ſo lively an *Inſtance*, as perhaps Hiſtory can ſcarce parallel.

Here were parts ſo exalted by Nature, and improved by Study, and yet ſo corrupted and debaſed by Irreligion and Vice, that he who was made to be one of the Glories of his Age was become a Proverb, and if his Repentance had not interpoſed, would have been one of the greateſt Reproaches of it. He knew well the ſmall ſtrength of that weak Cauſe, and

and at first despised, but afterwards abhorred it. He felt the Mischiefs, and saw the madness of it; and therefore though he lived to the scandal of many, he died as much to the Edification of all those who saw him; and because they were but a small number, he desired that he might even when dead, yet speak. He was willing nothing should be concealed that might cast Reproach on himself and on Sin, and offer up Glory to God and Religion. So that though he lived a hainous Sinner, yet he died a most exemplary Penitent.

It would be a vain and Ridiculous Inference for any from hence to draw Argument about the abstruse Secrets of Predestination; and to con-

clud

clude that if they are of the number of the Elect, they may live as they will, and that Divine Grace will at ſome time or other violently conſtrain them, and irreſiſtably work upon them. But as St. *Paul* was called to that eminent Service for which he was appointed, in ſo ſtupendious a manner, as is no warrant for others to expect ſuch a Vocation; ſo if upon ſome ſignal Occaſions ſuch Converſions fall out, which, how far they are ſhort of Miracles, I ſhall not determine, it is not only a vain but a pernicious Imagination, for any to go on in their ill ways upon a fond conceit and Expectation that the like will befall them: For whatſoever God's extraordinary Dealings with

ſome may be, we are ſure his common way of Working is by offering theſe things to our rational Faculties, which, by the aſſiſtances of his Grace, if we improve them all we can, ſhall be certainly effectual for our Reformation; and if we neglect or abuſe theſe, we put our ſelves beyond the common Methods of God's Mercy, and have no reaſon to expect that Wonders ſhould be wrought for our Conviction; which though they ſometimes happen, that they may give an effectual Alarm for the awaking of others, yet it would deſtroy the whole deſign of Religion if Men ſhould depend upon, or look for ſuch an extraordinary and forcible Operation of God's Grace.

And

And I hope that thoſe who have had ſome ſharp Reflections on their paſt Life, ſo as to be reſolved to forſake their ill Courſes, will not take the leaſt encouragement to themſelves in that deſperate and unreaſonable Reſolution of putting off their Repentance till they can ſin no longer, from the hopes I have expreſs'd of this Lord's obtaining Mercy at the laſt; and from thence preſume that they alſo ſhall be received, when they turn to God on their Death-Beds: For what Mercy ſoever God may ſhew to ſuch as really were never inwardly touched before that time; yet there is no reaſon to think that thoſe who have dealt ſo diſingenuouſly with God and their own Souls, as deſignedly to put off

their turning to him, upon such Considerations, should be then accepted with him. They may dye suddenly, or by a Disease that may so disorder their Understandings, that they shall not be in any capacity of Reflecting on their past Lives. The inward Conversion of our Minds is not so in our power, that it can be effected without Divine grace assisting. And there is no reason for those who have neglected these Assistances all their Lives, to expect them in so extraordinary manner at their Death. Nor can one, especially in a Sickness, that is quick and critical, be able to do those things that are often indispensably necessary to make his Repentance compleat: And

even

even in a longer Diſeaſe, in which there are larger Opportunities for theſe things. Yet there is great Reaſon to doubt of a Repentance begun and kept up meerly by Terror, and not from any ingenuous Principle. In which, though I will not take on me to limit the Mercies of God, which are boundleſs, yet this muſt be confeſſed, that to delay Repentance, with ſuch a deſign, is to put the greateſt Concernment we have upon the moſt dangerous and deſperate Iſſue that is poſſible.

But they that will ſtill go on in their Sins, and be ſo partial to them, as to uſe all endeavors to ſtrengthen themſelves in their evil Courſe, even by theſe very things which the Providence

dence of God sets before them, for the casting down of these strong holds of Sin: What is to be said to such? it is to be feared, that if they obstinately persist, they will by degrees come within that Curse, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still. But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the Glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.*

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